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# Answering The "How" Question Regarding Healing : the Story of the Healing of the Blind Man

Erin M. Diericx

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ANSWERING THE “HOW” QUESTION REGARDING HEALING

THE STORY OF THE HEALING

OF THE BLIND MAN

by

ERIN M DIERICX

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Luther Seminary  
In Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

THESIS ADVISER: CRAIG R KOESTER

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## CHAPTER ONE

### HOW IS ONE HEALED???

Here comes my best friend, Jane, whom I have known since preschool, and by the look on her face we are about to have the same conversation we have had a million times – whenever she spends a weekend with her dad and her step-mom. Now you need to understand that her dad and her step-mom are Baptists, and he is the pastor at their church. The conversation will start with Jane complaining about having to go in front of the church and having forty or so people, all strangers, put their hands on her to pray over her to have God heal her of her disability. For someone with sensory issues, like my best friend, this is a major ordeal, but another issues exists which greatly compounds the complexity of the situation.

The other issue came into play when they were driving home from church. Like myself, Jane has Cerebral Palsy, a progressive disability. This means individuals get strong and are able to learn how to do various activities, such as dressing and eating, by themselves over time in the simplest terms. Jane and I use wheelchairs to get around, though Jane can use canes to walk around at home and when she goes out on short trips. Jane's dad expects her to be healed and not need her wheelchair or her canes to get around after the forty people have prayed over her for her healing. When Jane is not healed after having forty people pray over her, her dad claims, "You need to have more faith in Jesus Christ. If you had more faith, you would be healed." This is what is

distressing my dear friend. She always asks me, being the religious one in our circle of friends, “Why am I not healed? Do I need more faith?” I always say, “You are being healed, Jane. You continue to get stronger everyday. Jesus Christ is continually healing you everyday.” This does the job for the day, but it always leaves a pit in my stomach as though there is more for me to say. Sometimes I explain we get new bodies when we go to heaven, but it never seems to be enough.

As I sit and reflect on the past million conversations with Jane surrounding this issue of healing, I am stuck by the words “heal” and “why” which both seems to fall short of the real issue. First, the word “heal” is often times used interchangeable with the word “cure”. To be cured means an individual has been able to have a disease lifted in one of the dimensions (physical, psychosocial, and spiritual). An individual can be cured when he/she has his/her appendix taken out.<sup>1</sup> When an individual is cured, it happened under the pretense of a doctor performing surgery or prescribing medication.<sup>2</sup> It takes a medical physicians or specialists to cure an individual.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the act of healing is the responsibility and choice of the individual because it comes from within his/herself according to Lerner.<sup>4</sup> One may argue that healing involves more than just an individual’s choice, but it extends beyond the individual and into his/her social network.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard E YaDeau, “Healing,” *Word and World* 2/4 (1982): 317.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Campbell, “Cure and Healing,” Froedtert and Medical College of Wisconsin, <http://www.froedtert.com/HealthResources/ReadingRoom/HealthBlo...> (accessed April 17, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Lerner, “Healing versus Curing Cancer,” USC University Hospital – Los Angeles, CA, <http://uscuh.staywellsolutiononline.com/Relatedterms/34,26018-1> (accessed April 17, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

A healing requires social, personal, and communal networks which will support and promote an individual to experience one. The community has the responsibility to see that the individual has the support he/she needs to experience physical, psychosocial, and spiritual healings. For instance, an individual going through AA needs the support of his/her sponsor. Yes, the individual has the choice to go through AA; however, the community has the responsibility to ensure he/she has the support to be successful in the program. The same idea is true with anyone needing physical, psychosocial, and/or spiritual healing(s).

To make the distinction clearer, let's take two cases where the two different individuals need to be cured and healed. The first case involves a woman who had breast cancer. Her doctor was able to do surgery before it spread, and the woman underwent chemo. The cancer went away, and the woman has been in remission for five years. The woman was cured. However, the woman slipped into depression while going through chemo after her husband left her, and now she continues to drink every night at the local bar. The woman goes home with a different man every night hoping to fill her emptiness.

The second case involves a man who has been battling cancer over the past ten years. Each time the man went into remission he went on a trip with his five daughters and wife which he planned while going through chemo. The man had a strong spirit and always had to joke to tell when he came in for his chemo treatments. When the cancer finally took him, the man sent his five daughters and wife on a trip with a letter instructing them to celebrate life for he would always be with them.

These two cases help us to distinguish between cure and heal. In the case of the woman, she was cured but not healed; on the other hand, the man was not cured but was

healed. YaDeau writes, “In an adult-adult exchange, the pastor and the physician in their relationships with the patient must commit themselves to doing things ‘with’ the individual, not ‘to’ or ‘for’ the individual.” YaDeau hopes medical physicians and pastors will work together with the individual and his/her family to find the best possible treatment plan for him/her. Not only that, YaDeau is aiming for treatment of the patient as an individual, not like an object.<sup>5</sup> By doing so, the medical physician and pastor would be aiming to cure and heal the individual to ensure his/her physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs are met. When all three of these dimensions are addressed, the individual gets treated as a whole and not just in parts.

Second, the “why” question leads people to ask why God is not healing them at this moment in time or why God is healing someone else and not them. The “why” question creates a negative connotation of “God doesn’t love me.” Of course, God loves me for the Bible tells me so (as the old Sunday school song goes). The “how” question seems more fitting because it leads us to ask how we are being healed. It creates a positive connotation of how God loves us. Instead of looking at why God has not healed an individual, the “how” question examines the underlying ways of how God is healing an individual.

After reflecting on Jane’s question, I am realizing she is asking two separate questions: (1) How can I be cured? (2) How can I be healed? Her dad focuses on why Jane has not been cured, because he wants her to be able to walk like any other young adult her age. Her dad is missing how God is working to cure and heal Jane. In this

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<sup>5</sup> Richard E YaDeau, “Healing,” *Word and World* 2/4 (1982): 319.

study, the dimensions of curing and healing which include physical, psychosocial, and spiritual will help to answer the “how” questions, by steering us in new directions. Life also has the same three dimensions, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual, which will create a correlation between life and healing.

There are many individuals who pray for healing and many more who wonder what it means to be healed. How can we provide them with an answer? The Bible has many healing stories. Elijah restores the life of a young boy (1 Kings 17:17-24); Elisha healed Naaman from leprosy by having him wash in the Jordan seven times (2 Kings 5:1-19); Jesus Christ heals several individuals, including a leper (Matthew 8:1-4), the centurion’s slave (Matthew 8:5-12), the lame man unable to walk (John 5:1-18). In these stories, the readers are given a quick synopsis of what the individual had wrong with them and how they were healed. The readers do not know what happens to the individuals after they are healed. These stories leave the readers to wonder.

Jane’s questions are what lead me to study the healing of the blind man in John 9. The healing stories mentioned above are short stories where the readers have little information about the individual. In John 9 of the healing of the blind man, the readers are told the whole story of how the blind man was healed, how he became a believer in Jesus Christ, and how the healing affected the community. This story demonstrates three elements of healing: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. The readers are able to observe the blind man growing in his faith and how he continues to be healed. Throughout my reading of John 9, I will be asking how the blind man continues to be healed. As one reads the Gospel of John, the reader sees a recurring theme of life which

has physical, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions. Healing stories in the Gospel of John have the same three dimensions, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual, as life.

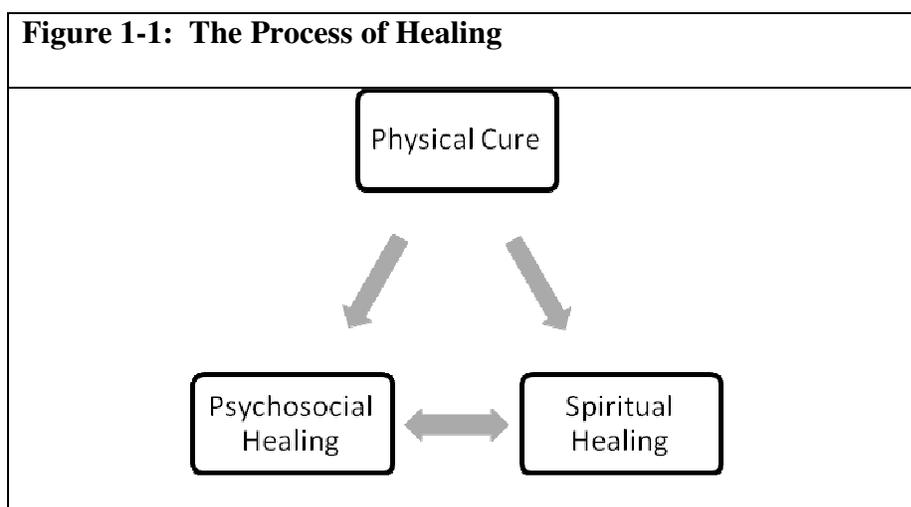
To ensure everyone is on the same page, it may be useful to define the three dimensions of life and healing. First, the physical dimension involves the abilities of the body, including the abilities to walk, talk, and breathe. To be physically cured means an individual gaining full ability of his/her body. For example, when the blind man regains his sight (John 9:6-7) he is physically cured. Second, the psychosocial dimension involves "...the growth of the personality in relation to other persons and as a member of a society from infancy throughout life. It is the formation, over time, of a social self, a self that identifies with the family, the culture, the nation, and so forth."<sup>6</sup> Simply the psychosocial dimension includes learning about the world around oneself and creating social networks to support him/her in life. The previously blind man experiences a psychosocial healing as he is questioned by the Pharisees, and he has to defend his convictions regarding his physical cure and in turn Jesus. The learning process occurs when the previously blind man has to defend himself and Jesus to the Pharisees during their interrogations (John 9:13-17, 24-29). In turn, the previously blind man's social network changes by the end of John 9; he goes from being a beggar on the outside of the Jewish synagogue to being kicked out of the synagogue for his convictions to being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Third, the spiritual dimension involves an individual having a full relationship with a higher power or a super-natural being in the current discussion of wellness, such as

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<sup>6</sup> Frank J Bruno, *Dictionary of Keywords in Psychology* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 183.

Allah, God, or Zeus. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Greek methodology, Judaism, and Buddhism all have their own god(s) which provide(s) individuals with different ways of expressing their spirituality. In this paper, to have a spiritual healing means an individual comes into a full relationship with the Triune God by confessing Jesus Christ as the Messiah, though it does not undermine any other belief system. Being spiritual is more than just an individualistic move; rather it causes a paradigm shift in one's life and in the life of a community. The previously blind man experiences a spiritual healing when he recognizes Jesus as Lord and worships Him. An individual who experiences all three dimensions when he/she is healed is well rounded in her/his life afterwards.



I hope to show that when an individual is fully healed his/her physical cure supports a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing. Figure 1-1 (above) gives a picture of how the three dimensions ideally work together. The physical cure can support a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, because the physical cure causes an individual to seek the answer to “how was I cured?” There are one-way arrows between physical cure and psychosocial healing and between physical cure and spiritual healing,

because a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing are supported or induced by a physical cure when one is need. Some individuals would say that being spiritual by praying to God induces a physical cure which may be true to the point that God knows/hears them being faithful. However, the Triune God is the only one who can make a physical cure happen. Also, when an individual prays to God, he/she does not necessarily need a spiritual healing, though he/she could experience spiritual healing by becoming more faithful to God. This explains why unbelievers sometimes experience physical cures which are still an act of God and why believers do not always experience physical cures. In this paper, there is an assumption that a physical cure happens as an act of God and is not dependent on one's spirituality since most of the healing stories discussed support this view. One could argue that all three arrows should go both ways, but that is not the focus of this paper. A physical cure welcomes an individual to have a full understanding of oneself, Jesus, and God (psychosocial healing) as well as welcoming one into a fuller relationship with Jesus Christ and God (spiritual healing).

The psychosocial healing and spiritual healing both support each other, hence the double arrow between the two in figure 1-1. A psychosocial healing can support a spiritual healing because as an individual begins to feel welcomed into the family of believers he/she starts coming to believe in Him. The more the individual grows in his/her identity as a believer in Jesus Christ, the more he/she will want to be in a relationship with Him. The same is true as to how a spiritual healing supports a psychosocial healing. The more an individual believes in God, the more he/she wants to become a part of the social network of believers. It is almost as though psychosocial healings and spiritual healings occur simultaneously when an individual is willing for a

full healing to take place. As we study John 9, we will see how the blind man experiences a physical cure, a psychosocial healing, and a spiritual healing.

At the same time, when an individual does not need a physical cure he/she can still experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, as we will see in the case of the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42) in the next chapter. Also, an individual does not always experience a psychosocial healing and/or a spiritual healing as a result of a physical cure. We will see an example of this when we look at the story of the healing of the paralyzed man (John 5:1-10) in the next chapter. Finally, an individual can experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, even though he/she still needs a physical cure. One's healing is dependent on one's needs as an individual and one's willingness to know and to be in a relationship with God and Jesus Christ. The process of healing occurs over one's lifetime as he/she grows into his/her new roles in life.

### **Themes**

Before we can discuss John 9, we need to look larger themes throughout the Gospel of John. One theme is the contrast between light and darknes (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-5; 3:19-21; 5:24; 12:44-46; 14:7). On one level, there is the physical element of light and darkness. On another level, darkness can portray a lack of faith an individual has in Jesus Christ while the light shows that an individual has faith in Jesus Christ.

The second theme is life and healing which have the same three dimensions: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. In life, the physical dimension involves the human body and how it functions. When the human body needs repair, a physical cure is necessary to allow it to function properly. The readers of John see Jesus cure the blind man by giving him his sight. Life also has a psychosocial dimension where individuals

know how to interact with each other and behave in a social environment as well as having an understanding of the world around them. When an individual needs a psychosocial cure and/or healing, he/she needs to feel a part of a network which understands him/her for who he/she is on the outside and in the inside. A psychosocial cure happens when individuals deal with depression, an anxiety disorder, or a compulsion disorder where a doctor prescribes medication which lessens the dysfunction. A psychosocial healing happens when the individual recognizes he/she is a part of a group which accepts him/her for who he/she is. The individual takes on a whole new way of life. In the religious realm, the individual begins to understand who God and Jesus are and what They can give the individual. Finally, life has a spiritual dimension where individuals are in full relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A spiritual healing is needed when an individual is not in a full relationship with God and happens when he/she confesses his/her faith in God and worships Him. When healing happens in all or some of the dimensions, depending on the needs of the individual, he/she experiences the fullness of life. Therefore, in this paper, the healing of the blind man is examined to show the readers how he was physically cured, psychosocially healed, and spiritually healed in order that he could enjoy the fullness of life. By doing so, we can then form a process of healing in which church leaders can share with their congregations.

These definitions will allow us to make a comparison with the dimensions of life and the dimensions of healing since they are entangled together. These themes will be discussed at length in the next chapter. It is important to note here that these themes continue to develop in John 9 and in the rest of the Gospel of John. The themes also

help the readers understand Jesus' message as the author of the Gospel of John writes it in the story of the healing of the blind man.

In the Gospel of John, there always seems to be a double meaning in what the fourth evangelist writes down. These two meanings come at a cognitive level and an affective level. The cognitive level is what a reader would associate different symbols with based on their cultural surroundings. For example, the readers and hearers of the fourth gospel would see and hear the Greek word *blevpw* meaning "to see" in English think of the physical aspect of seeing. The readers would also think of being able to think of the ability to see colors and shapes. The cognitive level takes the concrete meaning of a word of what the individual knows to be true. On the other hand, the affective level is what a reader associates the text with based on their background. This makes readers think on a deeper level. The word *blevpw* on the affective level would make the readers think of what it means "to see" Jesus Christ. The reader sees the affective level working in John 9:39-41 when the Pharisees and Jesus use the word *tuflov*" meaning "blind". In this context, being "blind" means a separation between the Pharisees and Jesus, because they do not believe. However, on the cognitive level, being "blind" means the inability to see (John 9:2, 17, 18-20, 24).<sup>7</sup>

The double meaning interplay will be an important issue within John 9 of the healing of the blind man. This issue will become apparent when we examine the double meanings of light and darkness as well as the ability and the inability to see. As we discuss the themes of light and darkness and life and healing, we will see the cognitive

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<sup>7</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 16-17.

level and the affective level. Here it is important to recognize that not everything in the Gospel of John appears clear at the first glance. A second or third reading can help to gain the complete picture of a story within the Gospel of John.

### **Approach Method**

By working with the literary paradigm, we will be able to work the narrative story of John 9. The literary method does not concern itself with historical context, unless the text speaks of a historical event or tradition, rather the interpreters concern themselves with the focus of the text, and the textual voice that comes alive when it is read aloud. The literary method pays close attention to the words and the message in the text. This is what differentiates the literary approach from a historical approach. In the literary approach, there is little interest in the culture in which the text was written or its author. The act of interpretation is the relationship between the reader and the given text.<sup>8</sup>

The literary paradigm has three key features; an ahistorical view of the texts, autonomy of the texts, and meaning as aesthetics. The first key feature is the ahistorical view of the texts, meaning the literary approach does not focus on the history of a text and does not take it into consideration when interpreting the text. Interpreters are concerned with the final project of the text, not how the text developed over time. Interpreters do, however, compare different texts with each other, even texts from different time periods. The texts being compared do not need to go in a chronological order, have a common theme or thread to link them to together, or have a common

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<sup>8</sup> Carl R Holladay, "Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 136-137.

historical influence. Instead, the texts are compared based on their formal similarities, regardless of their historical background.<sup>9</sup>

Since the literary method regards texts as timeless, another kind of analysis needs to be used - often times diachronic analysis or synchronic analysis. Diachronic (“through time”) analysis is when interpreters examine the language and other aspects of the text as developed over time. This allows interpreters to evaluate how the meanings and the terms in the text have changed over time creating a linear timeline. Synchronic (“with time” or “at the same time”) analysis is when interpreters look at the text in a particular time, usually when it was written, and compare it to other texts in the same time period. This analysis focuses on one point on the timeline with several texts.<sup>10</sup>

Interpreters do make use of categories of time and history when the texts unfold history or move through time. Historical analysis is may be used when the text mentions a historical event. This requires interpreters to think temporally and historically, but only to the extent that the text requires it.<sup>11</sup> Since one of the issues the Pharisees bring up is the issue of working on the Sabbath, we will look at the history of the Sabbath and why it is so controversial that Jesus healed on the Sabbath.

The second key feature of the literary paradigm is autonomy of the text. Here, the text stands by itself, speaks for itself, and has clues to aide in interpretation. It is the interpreters’ job to recognize the independent voice of the text as to what it says and how it says it. By doing so, the interpreter has to give the text full authority over how it is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 137-138.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,138.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 138.

interpreted. Since the text is not connected to a historical setting, author, or anything outside it, the text is seen as independent with a life of its own as a finished work. With this independence, the text owns a unique voice bearing a message for its readers.<sup>12</sup>

Three main consequences emerge from the autonomy of the text. First, the final form of the text is given attention. Although the text may have a pre-history, including drafts, the focus of the interpretation is given to its final form. The earlier drafts are important to diachronic textual criticism, but in the literary paradigm the drafts are regarded as secondary since they are a part of the text's past. Second, the text is viewed as a whole, or a single complete work. Even if the text is composed of smaller units, it is viewed as a whole. Usually, the interpreter assumes the text is read from beginning to end, even if the smaller units are examined, the larger picture is kept in mind. Third, the texts are viewed as being intrinsically meaningful. The text has enough clues for a reader to interpret it correctly. In the literary paradigm, there is a focus on the intrinsic dimension is emphasized rather than the extrinsic dimension. The meaning of the text is found within the text.<sup>13</sup>

Donald H Juel writes in his book entitled *The Gospel of Mark* that readers need to pay attention to the world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text. The world behind the text allows readers to view the written word of the gospel as a historical document. It invites the readers into the world from which the text came. The world of the text allows readers to put the structure, themes, and order of the text in context of the whole story. The pieces fit together to tell the whole story. The world in

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 139.

front allows readers to examine life and appreciate the text for what it means to them today. Readers should have the goal of having a richer and more sensitive reading and hearing of Gospel of John.<sup>14</sup>

The third key feature of the literary paradigm is meaning as aesthetic (or beauty). This is how the text expresses its meaning and how interpreters understand the meaning of the text. The final form and literary form of the text have special emphasis. The interpreter is able to gain experience through the meaning of the text. When individuals read, recite, and hear the text, they are experiencing the meaning of it. The meaning of the text shifts from the past to the present because of the ahistorical feature as explained above. When the text is read and interpreted by a new reader, the meaning occurs. When one is able to grasp the text, see how the smaller units work together, make correlations, and make appropriate judgments about it, then the beauty of the text can be revealed.<sup>15</sup>

Within the literary paradigm, there are six methods: literary criticism, rhetorical criticism, structuralism, narrative criticism, reader-response criticism, and deconstruction. In this paper, structuralism and narrative criticism are the methods used since John 9 tells the story of the blind man being healed by Jesus.

Since structuralism is tied to the cultural aspects from which a text comes, it is a more philosophical method which includes aspects of anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism. Structuralism has several assumptions which inform its meaning and

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<sup>14</sup> Donald H Juel, *The Gospel of Mark* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 30.

<sup>15</sup> Carl R Holladay, "Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible," 139-140.

the way the text is interpreted. First, structuralism takes into account the personal and the social aspects of language. The signs and symbols of a culture express the complexity of a society within the framework of its activities, relationships, norms, the systems of government, and the society.<sup>16</sup> In John 9, the readers see conflicts arise over the fact that Jesus performed a healing on the Sabbath.

Second, when language can express differences within a culture, the meaning of a text is expressed and is related by the words and sentences which create a connection between the speaker/listener and the cultural context. Within structuralism, language is viewed as functional, not ontological.<sup>17</sup> In John 9, Jesus calls for a cultural change when He says that the Pharisees are blind (John 9:40-41). Also, the previously blind man calls for a cultural change when he does not consider Jesus as a sinner for physically curing him on the Sabbath. These calls for changes create tension between the Pharisees and Jesus and the previously blind man.

Third, sets of opposites emerge in a cultural system which are the basis for the principle of binary opposition. Figuring out the meaning of a text requires the process of differentiation from the major train of thought that contrasting ideas and objects can help an individual understand them. For example, an individual cannot understand love without knowing about hate, or know what a female is without knowing what a male is.<sup>18</sup> The principle of binary opposition will come in handy when discussing the theme of light and darkness.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 141.

Now you might be wondering how structuralism fits in the literary paradigm. It fits because the focus is on a given text and it holds on to the ahistorical aspect of the literary paradigm. Structuralism listens carefully to the voice of the completed text and does not look back on the traditions surrounding it or its historical background. However, in order to understand the philosophical principles of the given text, interpreters need to look outside to an extent, yet the autonomy of the text needs to be preserved. Structuralism also allows the interpreters to compare a given text to other texts. This helps interpreters to find characteristics of a culture because all written texts have similar characteristics which reflect the culture, which in turn expresses its social structures and cultural norms. The aim of structuralism is to see “how the language works in the text”.<sup>19</sup> This will come in handy when we take a look at the actual Greek text of John 9 and start translating it into English.

Lastly, narrative criticism is the second method used in this paper. D Rhoads and D Michie characterized narrative criticism as “plot, conflict, character, setting, narrator, point of view, standards of judgment, the implied author, ideal reader, and rhetorical techniques.”<sup>20</sup> These characteristics of narrative criticism focus on the final form of the text. Narrative criticism looks at what the text reports and how it reports it. The text has a meaning within it which can only be revealed when an individual reads it. The message of a text can only unfold its story when it is read.<sup>21</sup> In this paper, we look how the story

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 142. Quote taken from D Rhoads and D Michie in their book entitled *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of the Gospels*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 142.

unfolds for the previously blind man, and then we look at how the story unfolds for the Pharisees. By working through the story twice, we will be able to see how the blind man is healed physically, psychosocially, and spiritually while the Pharisees lack in their understanding and belief of Jesus.

To use the narrative criticism method, one must “distinguished between the story that is told in the narrative and the way the narrative tells the story...”<sup>22</sup> This does not mean the text has a story within a story, but rather the way in which the story unfolds itself. It is the distinction between form and content. Therefore, the narrative critic pays close attention to the literary components, their arrangement, their patterns, and how they relate to each other.<sup>23</sup> This will become helpful when we examine the relationships between the blind man, his parents, the neighbors, the Pharisees, and Jesus Christ and how each character changes over time. Within narrative criticism, the critic traces how the story unfolds, the literary devices and strategies, and assesses how they are used. Furthermore, narrative criticism looks at the main character’s moral views in order to discover the perspective of the text. The goal here is to place the story in its reality and see what angle it takes on the topic or issue within its own context.<sup>24</sup>

Narrative criticism will be helpful when we examine the development of the blind man and the Pharisees as well as other healing stories. In Chapter two, I talk about the two themes in the Gospel of John as a whole. The first theme is light and darkness which the author of the Gospel of John uses on its cognitive level as well as its affective level.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 143.

The second theme is life and healing along with their three dimensions: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. I examine different healing stories and how each individual is, or is not, healed based on the three dimensions.

Chapter three focuses on the healings of the blind man and the conditions of the Pharisees. I start chapter three by first reading John 9 based on the experiences of the blind man and how he deals with the changes in his life after being healed. I examine the physical cures, psychosocial healings, and spiritual healings of the blind man. His physical cure happens right away when Jesus puts mud on his eyes and tells the blind man to wash in the Pool of Siloam (9:6-7). The psychosocial healing and spiritual healing of the blind man take place throughout John 9 as he begins to realize what Jesus Christ did for him and who Jesus Christ is. The psychosocial healing happens when the previously blind man understand the importance of being in the group of disciples and how Jesus accepts the ones others despises. Furthermore, becoming a part of the network of believers supports the previously blind man's spiritual healing which in turn makes the psychosocial healing stronger as he is accepted into the group of believers.

In the second half of chapter three, I reread John 9 to examine the physical condition, the psychosocial condition, and the spiritual condition of the Pharisees. There will be a reverse correlation between the healings of the blind man and the conditions of the Pharisees. As the blind man heals and begins to believe in Jesus Christ, the Pharisees harden their hearts and become blind to the message of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees will challenge Jesus and question his actions, his message, and his authority.

In chapter four, I do a quick summary of each of the healing stories discussed in chapter two and chapter three by applying them to figure 1-1. This will allow us to

examine how the three dimensions (physical, psychosocial, and spiritual) work together. Then I revisit Jane's question to try to give her answer.

By examining the dimensions of healing and life together, we will be able to observe their intersection and how they blend together in our lives. Narrative criticism will be helpful to explore how healing and life work together in the Gospel of John. At the same time, Jane's question, "Why am I not healed? Do I need more faith?", will come to haunt us. Or is the better question how are we healed? Are we healed in different ways than just physically? As we examine the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions of life and healing, we will be able to get an idea of how one is healed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEMES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Before digging into John 9 and seeing how it tries to answer our question of healing, we must first look at the themes in the Gospel of John as a whole. By doing this, we will see how they work in the story of the healing of the blind man. The theme of light and darkness in the Gospel of John causes one to examine one's life. Light represents life with God through Jesus Christ while darkness represents evil, sin, and death. Light is what brings individuals closer to God while darkness separates them from Him. The importance of the theme of light and darkness is that it shows the reader how individuals choose to live in the light and believe in the Triune God or to live in darkness and be unbelievers. The significance of this choice is that it directs how an individual lives their life. Jesus says that He is the light of the world while He is in it (John 9:5). Throughout John 9, the idea that light enables sight for individuals recurs and drives home that light and sight go together when they live with God.

The second theme is life and healing. It is important for us to examine how life and healing intersect and work together through the three dimensions of physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. The definitions laid out later in this chapter will help us to recognize the three dimensions in John 9 which we examine in the next chapter.

### **Theme: Light and Darkness**

In the Gospel of John, light and darkness are a central theme as the story of Jesus Christ unfolds. Light and darkness have a physical dimension and a theological dimension in the Gospel of John. The readers see the characters struggle with Jesus Christ's message of the difference between living in the light and living in the darkness. The physical aspects of light and darkness are easy for readers and the characters in the Gospel of John. The light brings brightness to the world and allows individuals to see the world around them. The darkness brings shadows upon the world which gives individuals an end to their day and time to rest. These aspects of light and darkness are easy to define based on the human experience.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who is out and about on a daily basis understands how light and darkness affect their lives. Most plants need light to grow and bloom. These plants provide humans with food, such as corn, oranges, and tomatoes, which provide them with nutrients to grow and prosper. Doctors recommend individuals get fifteen minutes of sunlight daily to get vitamin D to avoid fighting depression. In the physical dimensions, light actually gives life to plants and therefore life to individuals.

On the theological dimension, light and darkness represent two extremes in the Gospel of John. Light represents God, life, knowledge, and truth which believers hold onto. Believers are not afraid of the light and exposing their lives to the world, for the God of truth gives them life. Darkness represents everything opposing the light. It keeps

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<sup>1</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 141.

individuals from seeing the light and knowing God.<sup>2</sup> As the theme of light and darkness unfolds, readers will see how the two oppose each other.

Right away in the prologue, the readers are introduced to God as the light. In John 1:1-5, readers are told how the light brings forth the will of God. First, the light brings forth the power and presence of God which comes from the Greek word *logos*, translated as “word”. Since the word has been with God from the very beginning (an allusion to Genesis 1:1), it can express and give way to God’s power and presence in the world. Second, light gives way to life through God’s word. The power of the word is what brought forth “all things” to life in the beginning. Therefore, anyone who does not accept the word of God does not have “life” or “eternal life”. Those who accept Jesus Christ in their hearts are given “eternal life” beyond their physical death (John 5:24). Third, light gives way to knowing God through Jesus. Anyone who believes in, sees, and knows Jesus believes in, sees, and knows God (John 12:44-46; 14:7), and anyone who knows God in Jesus given eternal life through the light.<sup>3</sup>

Third, Jesus comes as the “light into the world” (John 3:19; 12:46). God gives life to individuals through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as well as coming in the Spirit. These events bring about truth into the world. God’s first said “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3f) when creating the world. God continues to put light into the world when He sends Jesus Christ into the world. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ.” (NET). Therefore, Lesslie

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 143.

Newbigin says, “The coming of Jesus is not an event...He is the both of life and of light, and the two are not to be separated, for the life of God is also the light of truth.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus then brings light and truth into the world, and gives eternal life to individuals who come to believe in Him.

Darkness opposes the light in every way. If the light gives way to God’s power and presence, then darkness gives way to the powers of sin and evil. Sin is human rebellion against God which creates hostility towards Jesus. Evil is the power which seeks to work against God. If light equals life, then darkness brings forth death to those who reject Jesus in both the physical and theological sense. There is an end to the relationship between God and the individual who chooses darkness over light. Finally, darkness brings forth “ignorance and unbelief”. The darkness attempts to take over the light and everything it upholds.<sup>5</sup>

In John 3:19-21, the readers see how the light and darkness theme comes into play for the author of the Gospel of John. Light and darkness create two groups of people: those who accept and those who reject Jesus; believers and unbelievers. The light gives an individual eternal life while the darkness causes individuals to perish. God and evil work against each other; either individuals do works for God and truth or works for evil and practice wickedness, but not both. However, the issue becomes complicated when

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<sup>4</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: an Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 3-4. Quote on page 4.

<sup>5</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 143-144.

one realizes that night covers both the wicked and the godly. The light is what reveals the truth about each person and exposes them for who they really represent.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of night (John 3:1-2a) physically leaves the reader confused whether he remained in the darkness or was coming to the light (until John 19:39-42 when he helps to bury Jesus). The readers know Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews who live according to the Law of Moses. The Torah gave the Pharisees a way to measure good and evil deeds. However, John 3:1-8 calls this method into question since his reaction to Jesus determines his relationship with God (which is true for everyone). At the end of his encounter with Jesus in John 3, Nicodemus still seems in the dark with his question of “how” (John 3:9) when it comes to his understanding and belief in Jesus, just as he came under the cover of night. However, Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman during the day (John 4:6) demonstrates how an individual comes to the light and accepts the teaching of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

Here the readers see the physical dimension of darkness as well as the psychosocial and spiritual dimensions. The fact that Nicodemus is named as a Pharisee shows the reader that not all the Pharisees were hostile towards Jesus. To seek out Jesus (as Nicodemus does) is the first act of discipleship for an individual. Yet Nicodemus comes under the cover of night (physical darkness) to seek Jesus (John 3:2a) shows how he seems afraid of the other Pharisees finding out that he went to see Him in fear of being expelled from the synagogue (psychosocial darkness). This fear shows how Nicodemus is still in the dark with regard to his belief in Jesus and keeps his faith (spiritual darkness)

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

in Jesus a secret in John 3:1-21. Yet Nicodemus is experiencing a psychosocial development since he comes at night when Jewish teachers studied. This fact shows Nicodemus comes to Jesus to learn from His teachings.<sup>8</sup>

Light also has psychosocial dimension and spiritual dimension. In John 7:50-52, the readers see the psychosocial dimension as Nicodemus stands up for Jesus by reminding the other Pharisees that the Jewish Law requires them to hear Jesus. The other Pharisees refuse to hear Nicodemus' statement by exclaiming Jesus cannot be a prophet since He comes from Galilee (John 7:52). The readers continue to see Nicodemus' psychosocial development as he grows an understanding of who Jesus Christ is and where he fits into God's plan (by listening to Jesus as the Jewish Law commands).<sup>9</sup> The light is what draws individuals into an understanding of God, Jesus Christ, and oneself through the psychosocial development.

In the spiritual dimension, the light draws individuals into a relationship with God and Jesus in faith. At the end of the Gospel of John, Nicodemus appears to make a public declaration of his discipleship in Jesus Christ by helping with His burial (John 19:39-42). This public act shows the readers that Nicodemus is no longer hiding his faith in Jesus Christ. Life comes through Jesus (John 1:4-5) who is the light of the world (John 9:5). Therefore, eternal life is granted to those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Readers of the Gospel of John will notice that the glory of God happens through the signs and miracles Jesus performs during His ministry (John 2:11; 11:40). On Palm

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<sup>8</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), 1:537.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

Sunday, Jesus claims His time of glorification has come for falling into the earth and dying (John 12:23-24). This is not how the readers expect Jesus to glorified, but then again nothing about Jesus' ministry has been normal. Jesus prays that God will glorify Him at the last supper (John 17:1) and then meets soldiers in the garden who arrest Him and will later crucify Him. Glorification of Jesus happens in the face of evil, sin, and death which are everything darkness represents. However, even in the darkness, the light breaks through.<sup>10</sup> Darkness is not able to conquer the light, even under the most extreme circumstances. The light will always prevail.

In chapter three, the theme of light and darkness will be discussed at length. In John 9:1-12, light and darkness have their physical properties when Jesus heals the blind man. His eyes are opened for the first time in his life, and the blind man can see the light of day. In John 9:13-41, the Pharisees struggle to find fault in Jesus, especially for healing on the Sabbath, because their hearts are hard causing them to be in the darkness. At the same time, the blind man begins to see the light which comes from Jesus Christ. His psychosocial healing happens when the previously blind man figures out who Jesus Christ is and feels accepted by the group of believers. The previously blind man's spiritual healing happens when he confesses Jesus as a prophet (John 9:17b) and as Lord (John 9:38). The readers see the Pharisees and the blind man go in opposite directions in their faith. The Pharisees move away from Jesus while the blind man grows closer to Him.

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<sup>10</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 167.

### **Theme: Life and Healing**

The issue of healing is what draws me to John 9 as I try to answer the question of how we are healed. In the Gospel of John, life is signified by light while darkness signifies everything else. Healing provides individuals with the light they are longing for in their lives, as we will see. It is important that life and healing are defined to ensure both readers and authors are on the same page. Light is defined in the Gospel of John as “the life of mankind” (John 1:4) by making it possible for life to exist. The light is what shines through the darkness (John 1:5) and gives life in the void. In John 1:5, the author is reminding the reader of Genesis 1:2-5 where God created light to give shape to the formless void. Light is what allows individuals to work during the day and to see what they are doing. Andreas J Kostenberger writes in his commentary on John, “Later, God placed lights in the sky to separate between light and darkness (Gen. 1:14-18). Light, in turn, makes it possible for life to exist.”<sup>11</sup> The author of the Gospel of John knows the powerful connection life has with light, because without light, life would be impossible. Therefore, life is what gives individuals the right to exist and prosper in the world in which they live. The physical dimension of life involves the human body and an individual’s surrounding environment. The psychosocial dimension of life involves an individual’s social networks and how he/she understands the world around him/her. The spiritual dimension of life involves one’s relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

Healing is needed when an individual experiences brokenness in his/her life. A physical cure is needed when an individual has an impairment to his/her body. A

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<sup>11</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, “John,” in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 30.

psychosocial healing is needed when an individual does not have a social network or understand the world around him/her. A spiritual healing happens when an individual is not in a relationship with God and Jesus Christ until someone introduces him/her to Him. When individuals experience healings in the three dimensions, they come to a fullness of life.

Before looking at John 9 in detail, it is necessary to define and give examples of the three dimensions of life and healing, which are physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. It is important to identify where these three dimensions come into play in the Gospel of John in order to see how they work in the healing of the blind man.

### The Physical Dimension

The physical dimension is probably the most easy to define. It involves the working human body, and its abilities, such as seeing, hearing, feeling, walking, and breathing. The beating heart, blood flow, pulse, and brain waves are also included in the physical dimension. People often times take the physical dimension for granted until their bodies become impaired in some way, such as a blockage in their heart, losing a leg or arm, or not being able to see. A physical impairment causes an individual to turn to God for a cure to repair him/her, so he/she can go on with his/her life.

One example of a physical cure in the Gospel of John is when a royal official goes up to Jesus in Cana in Galilee and asks him to heal<sup>12</sup> his dying son (John 4:47), who is at

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<sup>12</sup> The Greek is confusing when it comes to translating words, such as *ijavomai* (John 4:47) and *qerapeuvw* (John 5:10), where they could mean heal or cure. Here the royal official uses language which scholars today would interpret as asking for a cure. For this reason, I will use the word cure in regards to the royal official asking Jesus to

home in Capernaum (John 4:46-49). Jesus' first response to the royal official's request to cure his son is to say that the royal official has to see signs before he will believe in God (John 4:48). Without a second to think, the royal official repeats his request for Jesus to cure his son (John 4:49) as though this is his last resort showing his desperation.<sup>13</sup>

However the fact the royal official comes to Jesus in the first place shows some level of trust the man has in Him, though it would not be his spirituality which causes Jesus to cure his son. It is God's decision, and He does not measure one's spirituality to determine if he/she deserves a physical cure. Jesus told the royal official to "Go; your son will live." (John 4:50b). Here the physical impairment is not spelled out so the readers know exactly what made the son ill, but they are made aware of the urgency the royal official feels when coming to Jesus about his dying son. When the royal official returned to Capernaum the next day, he learned that his son was alive and started to recover the hour he spoke with Jesus the day before (John 4:51-53b). This is an example of a physical cure where an individual went to Jesus Christ and asked for an illness to be lifted. However, it should be noted that the royal official did not go to Him by his own faith but by what others had told him and out of desperation and selfish reasons. This story will be revisited when spiritual healings are discussed.

Another example of a physical cure is found in John 5:1-10, when Jesus cures a man who was disabled. After the man explained that he kept trying to go down to the pool when it was stirred but each time someone stepped out in front of him, Jesus told

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heal his son or the man who was disabled. I am not using the word cure interchanging with the word heal as explained in chapter one.

<sup>13</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, "John," in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 169-170.

him to pick up his mat and walk. Before being cured, the man was “paralyzed, lame, or extremely weak”<sup>14</sup> (John 5:3 defines those impaired this way as “invalids”). By what the man says in John 5:7 regarding his difficulty to get to the pool when it is stirred up he must be one of these “invalids”, though the reason he needs to be cured is not directly explained in the brief story. For this reason, it is important to note that healers were a hot commodity within Judaism and in the Greco-Roman society.<sup>15</sup> The readers are also told the man has had his condition for thirty eight years, indicating the permanence of it.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus is viewed as a healer in this story, as the readers of the Gospel of John have already seen in other healing stories (John 5:6-9a). The length of the man’s physical condition also shows the hopelessness he must have felt when nothing had cured him for a long time.<sup>17</sup> Both of these facts seem to add to the urgency for Jesus to physically cure the man. This physical curing story also expresses Jesus Christ’s concern and love for those who suffer and shows the obedience of the man.<sup>18</sup> The man is obedient to Jesus when he gets up, picks up his mat, and walks. However, the paralyzed man does not seem to understand the significance of being healed as a gift from God. The man simply reports who healed him and how he was healed to the Jewish authorities to direct their attention to Jesus. By doing so, the man is distracting them from his own Sabbath

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>16</sup> Gail R O’Day. “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 578.

<sup>17</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, “John,” in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 179.

<sup>18</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: an Exposition of the Fourth Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 64.

violation. When Jesus found the man later, He warns him to stop sinning and living in unbelief before something worse happens to him. This is where the involvement of the paralyzed man in the story stops, and he never reappears to show if he ever had a spiritual healing. There is nothing in the story to suggest the paralyzed man did or did not have faith in God before being cured or came to faith in God and Jesus after being cured. The readers are left wondering what happened to the paralyzed man for as soon as he is physically cured he gives a report to the Pharisees and runs into Jesus once more before he leaves the stage. This example shows how one's personal faith is not dependant on him/her experiencing being physically cured.

### The Psychosocial Dimension

The psychosocial dimension is defined by how one grows into one's personality and learns how to behave in society. In the psychosocial dimension, an individual needs to establish him/herself in a social network and is given encouragement within it. The individual also needs to learn about the world around him/her and how he/she fits into it. Finally, the psychosocial dimension deals with individuals' ability to identify oneself to family, culture, and nation.

In the case of the Samaritan woman, the terms "healing" or "cure" (or the idea of healing or cure) are neither explicitly used nor implied. The Samaritan woman does need healing on psychosocial and spiritual levels. However, the Samaritan woman does not need a physical cure, unlike the paralyzed man in John 5. The readers are able to see the Samaritan woman experience psychosocial and spiritual healings as Jesus under covers the hurts she experiences on a daily basis. Jesus directs the Samaritan woman to the gift, living water, He can offer her. The Samaritan woman does not ask for a healing, or even

conceive of needing one, until after Jesus offers her living water. The readers witness a change in the Samaritan woman as the story unfolds.

The Samaritan woman in John 4:4-26, 39-42 knows that Jews do not talk to Samaritans for fear of being contaminated (John 4:9), an individual needs a bucket to draw water (John 4:11-12), and the Messiah is coming to explain all things (John 4:25). In John 4:9, readers see the Samaritan woman recognizing the breaking of social norms. She knows the rules of Jewish teachers not speaking publicly to women, let alone a Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman also knows that Jews do not participate in conversation with Samaritans in general for fear of being contaminated. To challenge Jesus, the Samaritan woman asks Him if Gerizim or Jerusalem is the proper place to worship God. Jesus surprises the Samaritan woman by saying neither Gerizim or Jerusalem since there will come a day when true worshippers will worship God in spirit and truth. This redefines the social norms of society and creates a new way the Samaritan woman can identify and place herself with her culture.

By requesting water from the Samaritan woman, Jesus is breaking two big social norms – Jewish teachers do not talk to woman and Jews do not talk to Samaritans. For these reasons, the Samaritan woman questions why Jesus is talking to her (John 4:9). Jesus replies not by answering her question but by saying she should ask Him for “living water”. “Living water” has two meaning in Greek. The Samaritan woman recognizes the cognitive meaning of spring water while Jesus is implying the life-giving meaning on the affective level. In John 4:12, the readers see the Samaritan woman wrongly accused Jesus of being lesser than Jacob when they know the opposite is true. Yet the readers can

understand why the Samaritan woman challenges Jesus to prove He is greater than Jacob.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus replies to the Samaritan woman's challenge with an explanation of being thirsty based on the two meanings of "living water". He says that anyone who drinks the water from the well will be thirsty again (John 4:13). However, the "living water" Jesus can give individuals will not cause them to thirst again and will give them eternal life (John 4:14).<sup>20</sup> The water in Jacob's well is bound to a place and time where it only sustains an individual for a short time. The water Jesus gives people springs up within them and gives them eternal life.<sup>21</sup> The water Jesus offers gives life to the individuals who drink it. The Samaritan woman begins to understand Jesus' radical gift. She answers Jesus with excitement for she will no longer need to come to the well to draw water and asks Him to give her some (John 4:15). Yet the Samaritan woman still misses the full effect the "living water" can give her. This is where the readers of the Gospel see the Samaritan woman begin to experience a psychosocial healing.

Finally, the Samaritan woman understands the Messiah has not come yet and is coming to fulfilled the promise (John 4:25). This indicates that the Samaritan woman has heard of the eschatological promise of the Messiah since, like the Jews, the Samaritans believed in the coming One. However, the Samaritan woman does not realize who Jesus

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<sup>19</sup>Gail R O'Day. "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 566.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 566.

<sup>21</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 189.

is until He says “I am” (John 4:26).<sup>22</sup> The Samaritan woman also learns about herself, her family, and her world which helps her to find a social network where she fits in. The psychosocial healing comes in when the Samaritan woman realizes who Jesus is, what He can give her, and how He redefines her world. Jesus also makes it possible for the Samaritan woman to become an insider with those who rejected her by giving her the insight of the future and the insight about “living water.” When the Samaritan woman has realized the gift Jesus was giving her, she went into town and brought others to Jesus; they too came to believe in Him (John 4:39-40). The Samaritan woman is given a whole new life which is a part of the psychosocial healing which is strengthened by her becoming one of Jesus’ disciples. By realizing this gift, the Samaritan woman gained the insight which will lead to her spiritual healing (see below).

A second example of a psychosocial healing is when the royal official gains a new understanding about his identity, his world, and his culture. The royal official first approaches Jesus out of faith that He is a miracle worker can heal his son. Jesus’ comment about the man needing to see a sign before believing in Him (John 4:48) should not be mistaken as rude. Jesus is directing the royal official to see the miracle as coming from God and not just Jesus as a miracle worker. Also, Jesus is addressing everyone in Cana hearing this conversation, so that they too will believe in God and Jesus, not just for Their miracles but for Their gift of eternal life.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Gail R O’Day. “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” 568.

<sup>23</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 175-176.

The royal official's second attempt to get Jesus to go back with him and to cure his son shows how the father is motivated by his son's critical condition. The readers see this when the royal official says, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." (John 4:9). As Jesus tries to withdraw Himself from the royal official, he pushes Jesus with more intensity. Even though the royal official pushes Jesus harder, Jesus sends him away with only the word that his son would live (John 4:50a). The fact the royal official believes Jesus and goes back home to his son (John 4:50b) shows how he is growing in his faith in Jesus. When the royal official returns home, he learns his son got better the hour Jesus said he would live (John 4:53). In this miracle, Jesus puts Himself between the father and the son when the royal official comes looking for a miracle.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that the royal official is from Galilee tells the readers that he could be pagan and was probably considered unclean by the Jews. This is another example of how Jesus goes against the Jewish teachings and tries to bridge the gap between the Jews and the Gentiles.<sup>25</sup> This fact strengthens the royal official's psychosocial healing because he was an outsider and is now an insider. The royal official is included in what was thought to be a very inclusive group. It provides the royal official with an identity when he becomes a disciple of Jesus. However, there were many Jews living in Galilee, so the royal official could have been a Jew. The royal official could have been a Gentile as well. The story gives the readers no hard evidence of the royal official's ethnic background.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>25</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), 1:631.

The royal official experiences a psychosocial healing when he realizes Jesus is more than just a miracle worker. Because the royal official comes to believe, his whole household comes to believe in Jesus and God. This creates a network of believers which enforces the psychosocial healing. The royal official grows in his understanding of Jesus as the giver of life which will only deepen his spiritual healing (see below).

The final example of a psychosocial healing is with the man who was paralyzed in John 5:10-18. After Jesus physically heals him, the man who was paralyzed goes to the Pharisees who tell him that it is not lawful for him to carry his mat on the Sabbath (John 5:10). The man who was paralyzed answers the Pharisees by saying, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” (John 5:11). When the Pharisees ask the man who was paralyzed who cured him, the man did not know since Jesus disappeared into the crowd before he sees Him (John 5:13). In these verses though, the man who was paralyzed is directing the Pharisees’ attention to Jesus in order to avoid attention to his own violation of the Sabbath.<sup>26</sup> The man who was paralyzed is reflecting his own Sabbath violation onto Jesus who instructed him to pick up his mat and walk. By doing so, the man who was paralyzed avoids the consequences of violating the Sabbath.

Even with Jesus’ warning (John 5:14), the man who was paralyzed betrays Jesus by giving the Pharisees His name as the one who healed him.<sup>27</sup> By betraying Jesus, the man who was paralyzed is refusing Jesus’ invitation to be in relationship with the Triune

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<sup>26</sup>Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 188.

<sup>27</sup> Rodney A Whitacre, “John,” in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 123.

God. This further separates the man who was paralyzed from God as he continues to stay in relationship with the Pharisees who wish to persecute Jesus. Therefore, the man who was paralyzed chooses to remain in the darkness by refusing to come to the light. The man's betrayal to Jesus is further discussed below in the spiritual dimension.

A psychosocial healing involves an individual learning social behaviors and establishing a social network. The Samaritan woman learned that Jesus was breaking social boundaries between men and women and between Jews and Gentiles. This helps the Samaritan woman feel like she fits into a social network, given that she is an outcast in her society before the meeting, as a result of her many husbands. The Samaritan woman builds a community around her when she comes to believe Jesus is the Messiah (John 4:25-26) and brings others to Him (John 4:39-42). The royal official also experiences a psychosocial healing when he realizes Jesus cured his son and comes to believe in God and Jesus Christ (John 4:51-53). However, the man who was paralyzed does not experience a psychosocial healing because he betrays Jesus to the Pharisees (John 5:10-13, 15-16). Psychosocial healings support the spiritual healings an individual experiences.

### The Spiritual Dimension

The spiritual (or faith) dimension is defined by one's relationship with the Triune God and one's trust or mistrust in Him. In the Gospel of John, the spiritual dimension is not a higher level in life which is attainable by an individual; rather it is how an individual relates to God, positively or negatively. *Crazy Talk* defines spirituality as "an interest or concern for 'spiritual' matters, which is often motivated by a personal interest

in material matters.”<sup>28</sup> This is a broad definition for it makes it sound like any belief system counts as being spiritual. A spiritual healing, therefore, involves coming into or strengthening a relationship with God and Jesus. For this paper, in terms of the Gospel of John, spirituality means the belief in the Triune God.

To be spiritual, or to have faith in God, means several things to believers. Jesus seems to define being spiritual in two ways – being born again of the spirit and believing God as the giver of eternal life. John 3:1-8 gives the reader an explanation of what Jesus meant by being born again. Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of night to proclaim to Him that He is a teacher from God which Nicodemus knows by the miraculous signs He has done (John 3:2). Jesus tells Nicodemus that no one can see the kingdom of God until he/she is born again (John 3:3). Of course, like anyone with any common sense, Nicodemus asks Jesus how one can be born again and if one can re-enter the womb of one’s mother and be born again (John 3:4). In John 3:5-8, Jesus plays with imagery of a physical birth and the spiritual rebirth. Water and the Spirit bring about new life. The readers of the Gospel of John can understand the baptismal language Jesus uses in John 3:5-6.<sup>29</sup> The baptismal language reminds the readers of their baptism and creates powerful images. To be reborn of the spirit, one must wash away their old selves and

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<sup>28</sup> Karl N Jacobson et al, *Crazy Talk: a Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms*, ed. Rolf A Jacobson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2008), 167.

<sup>29</sup> Gail R O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB* 550.

give way to their new life with the Triune God. As Keener writes in his commentary on John, it is a new birth from above which is a spiritual birth.<sup>30</sup>

Being spiritual also includes believing in eternal life. Jesus emphasizes that God sent His only son so individuals could come to believe and have eternal life (John 3:16). The Father sent Jesus not to condemn the world but to save it through Him (John 3:17). Those who come to believe in Jesus will not be condemned, while the non-believers stand to be condemned (John 3:18). In John 3:19-21, Jesus explains that anyone who loves the dark loves evil and hates the light for fear of being exposed, but anyone living in the truth lives in the light so others can see their works through God. The very presence of Jesus in the world brings the love of God for those who come to believe in the truth, and the judgment of God for those who decide to keep living in the darkness.<sup>31</sup> God sent His son to spread His love on earth, not necessarily to judge the world. But the division and therefore judgment comes in when individuals choose to live in darkness. To be spiritual means to live in the truth and the light which come from the Father. By living in the light, believers live lives exposed for others to see and are given eternal life.

The first example of a spiritual healing is the discussion Jesus has with the Samaritan woman at the Jacob's well. In John 4, Jesus is passing through Samaria when He stops at Jacob's well. John 4:4 has the Greek word *e!dei* which is translated as "had to" and denotes God's plan in the Gospel of John.<sup>32</sup> To say it was God's plan for Jesus to

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<sup>30</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), 1:546.

<sup>31</sup> Gail R O'Day. "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 552.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 565.

stop in Samaria means that there is a reason for Him to be there. Jesus sees the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and asks her to draw Him some water (John 4:7). The request of Jesus draws a parallel with Elijah and the widow of Sidon (1 Kings 17:10-11) which alludes to Jesus being a prophet. The scene also has messianic and bridal symbolism where a man and a woman first met at a well and were later married, such as Isaac (Genesis 24:10-61), Jacob (Genesis 29:1-20), and Moses (Exodus 2:15b-21). The imagery of the betrothal stories are reworked to illustrate that Jesus did not only come for Israel but also for the Gentiles.<sup>33</sup>

To try a new tactic, Jesus asks the Samaritan woman to go get her husband (John 4:16) to which she says she has no husband (John 4:17a). Jesus exclaims that she is correct to say she has no husband, because in fact she has five husbands and the one she has now is not her husband (John 4:17b-18). This causes the Samaritan woman to call Jesus a prophet (John 4:19). The Samaritan woman then asks Jesus where individuals should worship: the mountain called Gerizim or Jerusalem (John 4:20). This shows the Samaritan woman's loyalty to Jesus and her anticipation that He will speak with authority on the matter.<sup>34</sup> Jesus answers the Samaritan woman by saying she may worship either the mountain or Jerusalem for the hour is coming when individuals will worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). Upon hearing this, the Samaritan woman recalls that the Messiah is coming and will proclaim all things to them (John 4:25). Jesus simply says, "I am He who is talking to you." (John 4:26). The Greek "I am" statement recalls

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>34</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 567.

the divine name of God (Exodus 3:14) when God called Moses which confirms the prologue that says “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1).<sup>35</sup>

Finally in John 4:39-42, the readers see what kind of effect Jesus had on the Samaritan woman. Jesus is the Messiah who was sent by the Father to fulfill the eschatological promise; Jesus is also able to offer believers, Jewish or Gentiles, everlasting life. Not only did she come to believe that Jesus is the Savior, but many Samaritans came to believe and many more when He came to stay with them for a few days. Here the readers see how a witness can make others believers.

The second example of a spiritual healing goes back to the healing of the royal official’s son by Jesus. When the royal official first approaches Jesus to heal his son, he believes Jesus is a miracle worker. This shows the royal official’s faith in Jesus to perform miracles.<sup>36</sup> The royal official begins to be spiritually healed when he takes Jesus’ word that his will live (John 4:50a) and goes home. When the royal official arrives home in Capernaum, he learns from his servants his son started to get better at the exact moment Jesus said he would get better. The fact the father left Cana believing in the words of Jesus that his son would get better shows his obedience. The royal official listened to Jesus when He said, “Go, your son will be well.” which is repeated three times in the story (John 4:50, 51, 53). The repetition of this statement shows that the focus of the story is on Jesus’ promise and His being the giver of life which will be seen in John 9

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 568.

<sup>36</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 175.

when Jesus heals the blind man. When the royal official realizes his son healed by Jesus' words, he and his whole household comes to have faith in the Triune God (John 4:53a).<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that the author of the Gospel of John does not use the Greek verb ζω and the noun ζωη, unless Jesus Christ is speaking of eternal life. The author seems to be using an allusion by using the Greek verb ζω to illustrate that Jesus is the giver of life. This is apparent when Jesus tells the royal official that his son will live and restores him back to good health.<sup>38</sup> The spiritual healing happens to the royal official when he realizes Jesus Christ allowed his son to live. Here the royal official sees a glimpse of Jesus as the giver of life as he witnesses his son go from almost dying to living a full life.<sup>39</sup> Not only did He physically heal the son, but He also spiritually and psychosocially healed the royal official by giving him life through his son. Since the whole household came to believe in Jesus, it can be assumed the royal official's son also experienced a spiritual healing. The physical cure helped bring the royal official and his whole household to faith in the Triune God.

A third spiritual healing (or not) involves the man who was paralyzed. After the man who was paralyzed is interrogated by the Pharisees, Jesus finds him and say, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." (John 5:14). Although commentators have said in the past this statement contradicts what Jesus said in the healing of the blind man where blindness and sin have no

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 575.

<sup>38</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), 1:633.

<sup>39</sup> Rodney A Whitacre, "John," in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 116.

connection, Ridderbos believes that Jesus is demonstrating how His healing works do not extend outside of forgiveness of sins. Jesus' act of curing the man who was paralyzed is an act of forgiveness; Jesus' warning to the man is a call for him to realize the greater gift of receiving forgiveness and eternal whereas the worst "thing" would then be falling into judgment.<sup>40</sup>

The man who was paralyzed goes away and tells the Pharisees who healed him (John 5:15). The man who was paralyzed knows that the Pharisees opposes Jesus and knows any information he can give them will fuel the fire. This betrayal to Jesus is compared with the blind man coming to faith in Jesus. With the man who was paralyzed, the readers see God's love embracing someone who will betray Him.<sup>41</sup>

A spiritual healing involves recognizing the need to be in a relationship with God and Jesus and then acting upon it by confessing one's faith. In the cases of the Samaritan woman and the royal official, the readers see them coming into a relationship with God and Jesus by confessing their faith. However, the readers see the man who was paralyzed get physically cured but not come to faith in God and Jesus. Instead, the man betrays Jesus by going to the Pharisees. Spiritual healings are then dependent on one's willingness to be in a relationship with the Triune God.

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<sup>40</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 188.

<sup>41</sup> Rodney A Whitacre, "John," in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 123.

### Summary of Dimension

Life and healing intersect through their three dimensions of physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. First, the physical dimension defines the human body and how it operates. One needs a physical cure when part of one's body breaks down, as we have seen in the cases of the royal official's son and the man who was paralyzed. In both cases, the readers do not know the exact condition of the individuals, except that Jesus cured them of their physical impairment. Second, the psychosocial dimension involves an individual learning acceptable social behavior and establishing oneself in a social network as well as learning about his/her family, culture, and nation. The story of the Samaritan woman provides us with an example of what an individual knows to be true, such as an individual needs a bucket to get water from a well.

Third, the spiritual dimension involves an individual coming to know the truth and to coming into or strengthening his/her relationship with the Triune God. The spiritual dimension is defined by one's faith in the Triune God, at least for this paper. The Samaritan woman and the royal official both come into a relationship with God and Jesus and become Jesus' disciples. One needs a spiritual healing when one does not know the true gift of the light. We have seen this with the Samaritan woman and the royal official as they have come to believe in Jesus. When an individual is physically, psychosocially, and spiritually healed, he/she can live life to its fullest because his/her senses are awakened to everything around him/her, including the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **Looking Forward**

As we look forward to the discussion on John 9, we must keep in mind these themes of light and darkness and life and healing. The theme of light and darkness defines an individual's lifestyle and faith. An individual either lives in the light or the darkness; an individual either lives for God through Jesus Christ or he/she lives in evil through sin. In the chapter three we will examine how the blind man gains his sight and decides to live in the light and how the Pharisees become blind and live in darkness.

The three dimensions (physical, psychosocial, and spiritual) of life and healing intersect and work together to make an individual whole. We will see how the blind man experiences physical, psychosocial, and spiritual healings in John 9 in the next chapter. In doing so, we will be able to determine where we are physically, psychosocially, and spiritually healed in our own lives.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HEALINGS OF THE BLIND MAN AND THE CONDITIONS OF THE PHARISEES

When individuals think of healings, they usually think of the physical dimension. The car accident victim has the ability to learn how to walk again with one leg and a prosthetic. Or the cancer patient has the ability to beat the cancer. These healings are easy to see because individuals can see the change. They can watch the car accident victim overcome his physical limitations and be able to regain his abilities he had before. Individuals can watch a cancer patient lose her hair while going through chemo and grow it back when the cancer goes away and she needs no more chemo treatments. These physical cures are visible to the human eye.

Psychosocial and spiritual healings are less noticeable. Psychosocial healings deal with an individual's ability to think for him/herself and to show emotions. Unless a person knows an individual really well, they are not able to see the gradual change over time. Spiritual healings are the same way, because people cannot know another individual's faith.

As we study the healings of the blind man, we will examine where he experiences a physical cure, where he becomes aware of who Jesus is (the psychosocial healing), and where he confesses Jesus as Lord (the spiritual healing). When we look at the three

separate dimensions of healing, we begin to understand the complexity of the needs of humans. In this chapter, I provide my own translation of John 9. I take a few verses at a time and give my translation of them followed by a detailed discussion. By doing so, we will be able to note the changes (healings) the blind man experiences and the conditions of the Pharisees through the course of the story. The close examination will allow us to noticed where the blind man is physically, psychosocially, and spiritually healed and where the Pharisees lack in their understanding and belief in Jesus Christ.

### **The Healings of the Blind Man**

As we examine the healing of the blind man, we will see how he is physically, psychosocially, and spiritually healed. The story begins with Jesus healing the blind man when He passes him, which is the physical cure, (John 9:6-7) and all of his neighbors and others notice the change in him (John 9:8-12). As the story goes on, the readers recognize the blind man's ability to know who Jesus Christ is (John 9:8-12, 17, 30-33). Later readers see the blind man proclaim his faith in Jesus Christ and want to become one of His disciples (John 9:13-17, 24-29, 35-38). The reader will notice that the blind man will experience a physical cure and then his psychosocial and spiritual healings occur simultaneously. In this paper, the physical cure, psychosocial healing, and spiritual healing are discussed separately which means each section jumps around in John 9. A more in-depth look at the healings of the blind man will help the readers to understand the way each dimension works and how they affect the individual. In chapter four, I will discuss how all three dimensions of healing work together.

## John 9:1-7: The Physical cure

### **Translation: John 9:1-7**

John 9:1 When Jesus passed by, he saw a blind man.

<sup>2</sup> His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but in order that the works of God might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> It is necessary for us to work the deeds of the one who sent Me as long as it is day, for when night comes no one is able to work. <sup>5</sup> When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

<sup>6</sup> When He said this, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva and anointed him (the blind man) with the clay on his eyes. <sup>7</sup> He said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam (which means the sent one).” Then he (the blind man) went and washed and came back able to see.

### **Discussion: John 9:1-7**

John 9 begins with Jesus’ disciples asking him, “Who sinned?” They expect Jesus to say his parents sinned according to a common understanding of Exodus 20:5 where God warns that He would punished the third and fourth generations of children of fathers who have sinned. Yet Ezekiel 18:20 states that God would punish each person for his/her sins and not his/her children. Later Jewish scholars concluded that the child could have sinned in the womb.<sup>1</sup> Any one of these statements would have satisfied the

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<sup>1</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 104.

disciples. However Jesus gives His own answer which surprises the disciples as well as the readers. Jesus states, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but in order that the works of God might be revealed in him." (John 9:3). Most English translations leave out the word "but" which is in the Greek and add "he was born blind" in its place. By doing that, the English translations make it sound like the man was born blind to demonstrate God's works. This is not the case. In the Greek, Jesus gives no explanation as to what caused the man to be blind. Instead Jesus declares He will use the man's condition to reveal God's work.<sup>2</sup> God uses the not-so-perfect situation and uses it to His advantage. The cause of the impairment is still ambiguous, but the reader knows it was not caused by the parent's or the child's sins.

As we continue to examine this section of John 9, the readers witness a physical cure and nothing else. There is no proclamation of faith by the blind man in the first seven verses of John 9. In fact, the blind man does not say a word; instead, he goes and does what "Jesus" tells him to do. It is not until later does the blind man realize who Jesus is, though that is for a later discussion.

In the first five verses, the main concern is why the man was born blind. The Jewish tradition linked illness and sin together.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the disciples ask Jesus whether the sins of the blind man or the sins of his parents caused his blindness. If the blindness was caused by the blind man's parent's sins, then it would have been concluded

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>3</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 653.

that the mother sinned during the pregnancy.<sup>4</sup> However, Jesus rebukes this claim by saying that the man was born blind in order that the works of God could be revealed through him.

The Greek word *erga* is plural and is translated as “works”. The use of this word could mean that Jesus came to earth to do the works of God, though it is more likely Jesus is inviting the disciples to share in His Father’s mission. In both cases, the works come from the Father. Since modern electricity was not invented yet, it was common knowledge that individuals could only work during the day (John 9:4), and when the sun went down people went back to their homes or to their tents during battle.<sup>5</sup> The use of the light and darkness metaphor reminds the readers that Jesus will only be on earth a little while longer. Jesus makes the statement that He is the light of the world when He is in the world (John 9:5). This means Jesus is the light of the world which makes it possible for individuals to do God’s work.<sup>6</sup>

In John 9:6-7, the readers witness the actual physical cure of the blind man. The use of clay in Greco-Roman literature was common because it was thought to have a curing power to it. Mark is the only other gospel which gives the small details of the cure since Luke and Matthew avoided making associations to magic. Also, the Jewish tradition borrowed the use of spittle during cures from ancient customs. However, since Jesus had to knead the mud and saliva together in order to make the clay, He committed a

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<sup>4</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers LLC, 2003), 1:778.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 779.

<sup>6</sup> Gail R O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB*, 653.

forbidden act on the Sabbath.<sup>7</sup> Jesus could be recalling Genesis 2:7 where God breathed life into Adam.<sup>8</sup> This allusion could work since Jesus was giving the blind man the ability to see, and therefore a new life since he could now function in the world. The blind man is given the gift of life (John 9:6-7) just as Adam was given the gift of life (Genesis 2:7).

Jesus sends the blind man to the Pool of Siloam. Since there is no break between John 7 and 8 from chapter 9, the readers assume the Festival of Tabernacles is still being celebrated where the waters of the Pool of Siloam are holy. However, like the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-6), the waters of the Pool of Siloam are not curing until Jesus “sends” the individual to the pool. This makes it clear the author of the Gospel of John is not opposed to using ritual waters or traditional Jewish rituals, except when it excludes Jesus Christ all together.<sup>9</sup> By Jesus sending the blind man to the Pool of Siloam, the author of John incorporating the “sending” Jesus experienced in His baptism. Jesus is “sending” the blind man out into the light. Since birth, the blind man has been banished to live in darkness. The healing of the blind man shows how Jesus is light of the world.<sup>10</sup> This emphasizes the importance in Jesus’ role as the healer to the blind man and others.

This portion of the healing/cure is the concrete part which observers can notice the change, as the neighbors and others can see when the blind man is able to see. The neighbors and others start using their investigating skills in the next section to determine

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 653-654.

<sup>8</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 780.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 782.

<sup>10</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: an Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 121.

if it is the same man or not that was blind at the beginning of the chapter. They can see the man who was blind and now has sight.

The physical cure of the previously blind man leads him to experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing as the neighbors and the Pharisees question him. The fact that the eyes of the man who was blind since birth have been opened leads him to seek how this is possible. This is where the psychosocial healing takes place. The previously blind man is able to give himself a new identity and establishes a new social network. In the process the previously blind man is mandated to talk to the Pharisees (John 9:13-17, 24-34) who try to force him to pronounce that the man who healed him is a sinner (John 9:24-25). However, the previously blind man has a difficult saying that the man is a sinner just because He cured him on the Sabbath, and in fact refuses to do so. In this paper then, a psychosocial healing happens when an individual comes to understand his/her family, culture, and world.

The previously blind man experiences a spiritual healing when he identifies Jesus as a prophet (John 9:17), becomes His disciple (John 9:27), and worships Him (John 9:38). A spiritual healing happens when an individual comes into a full relationship with God and Jesus Christ. It is important to note that the psychosocial healings and spiritual healings happen simultaneously. As the previously blind man grows in his understanding of who Jesus is, he grows closer in a relationship to God and Jesus.

However, it should be noted that psychosocial healings and spiritual healings are not always induced by physical cures as was discussed above with the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4. Also, a physical cure does not always induce a psychosocial healing or a spiritual healing as discussed above with the paralyzed man in John 5.

### John 9:8-12, 17, 30-33: The Psychosocial Healing

In this section, the readers see the blind man identify himself as the previously blind man (John 9:9c) and identify Jesus Christ as the man who healed him (John 9:11). The blind man begins to take his own identity when he begins to identify himself with Jesus as one of his disciples. The psychosocial healing is an important building block for the blind man because it will give him a social network by becoming one of Jesus' disciples. His life is forever changed, and he has to learn what to do with the change.

#### **Translation: John 9:8-12**

John 9:8 Then the neighbors and those who formally saw him as a beggar began to ask, "Is he not the one who sat and begged?"<sup>9</sup> Some kept saying, "He is," while others kept saying, "He is not, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am."

<sup>10</sup> Then they kept saying, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered them, "The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and I received sight."

<sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is He?"

He said, "I do not know."

#### **Discussion: John 9:8-12**

In the first section of the psychosocial healing, the blind man has to do two things as the neighbors begin to argue who this man is. First, he has to identify himself as the previous blind man since there was no apparent audience when Jesus was performing the

miracle since he is an outside to the synagogue, the place of sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> The neighbors and others begin to recognize the previous blind man and argue over whether this “man” is the same man who was blind. The readers see this argument in John 9:8-9 with the Greek word *elegon* which is in the imperfect tense indicating that it is a repeated action. For this reason, I translated *elegon* as “kept saying” (four times in verses nine and ten) since the author of the Gospel of John wanted their readers to know that this was not a conversation which took place among friends in passing. This conversation became a debate repeated among the neighbors and anyone who saw and knew the “man.” It is important for the neighbors and others to learn the true identity of the “man” as the previously blind man in order to confirm the miracle.<sup>12</sup> The neighbors need to know for sure who this “man” with sight is before they can even imagine a miracle has happened.

At the end of verse nine, the readers hear the “man” repeat himself in saying he is the previously blind man. He is the man who was blind and begged before he could see. In Jerusalem, a beggar would remain poor and dependent since Judaism emphasized giving to charity, including giving to beggars to allow their survival.<sup>13</sup> The “man” was able to survive, barely however, when he was blind.

Now the previously blind man has to establish himself a new identity as the same man who was blind (and now has vision) which he does by saying, “I am” (John 9:9). By the previously blind man saying, “I am,” he is putting any uncertainty the neighbors and

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<sup>11</sup> Kasper Bro Larsen. *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John*. (Boston: Brill, 2008), 153.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>13</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 783.

others have regarding his identity as the one formally blind.<sup>14</sup> This is the first way the previously blind man becomes psychosocially healed when he is able to give himself a new identity as the man who was blind and now can see. By doing so, the previously blind man is opening himself to scrutiny from the Jewish neighbors and eventually the Pharisees, because now he has to explain how he gained his sight. This is where the situation becomes hostile towards the previously blind man and eventually Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

When the neighbors identify the “man” as the one who previously blind, they have to determine how he was healed. The previously blind man reports that the man called Jesus anointed his eyes with mud and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:11). The proclamation of Jesus healing him, the previously blind man, is the second way he is psychosocially healed for he is growing in his understanding of the situation at hand. By identifying Him as “the one they call Jesus” (John 9:11), the previously blind man is slowly becoming a part the social network which will include Jesus and His disciples. As he gains his own confidence, the previously blind man becomes more connected with Jesus (John 9:17, 33, 38).<sup>16</sup>

The neighbors and others who knew the previously blind man were divided by the news of Jesus healing him (John 9:9, 16; 7:43; 10:19). This seems to emphasize the importance of Jesus to the author of the Gospel of John as well as the Jewish synagogues

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<sup>14</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, translated by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 338.

<sup>15</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 783.

<sup>16</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 338.

opposing Jesus during the time it was written. Since the Pharisees, leaders in the Jewish synagogues, have the loudest voice opposing Jesus, the fact that the neighbors and the others took the previously blind man to the Pharisees to present his story was not positive. This shows how easily the neighbors and the others were persuaded by the Pharisees and put their trust in them to make the “right” decision.<sup>17</sup> The fear (the darkness) which rules over the neighbors and other shows how they are not grasping the new for they are not letting the old pass away.<sup>18</sup> The darkness is what ties the Pharisees and the neighbors together by refusing to see the light.

The last important detail this section holds is the fact that the previously blind man does not know where Jesus is at the current moment (John 9:12), because he has yet to see Jesus (John 9:7).<sup>19</sup> The readers will continue to watch the previously blind man grow in his relationship with Jesus.

**Translation: John 9:17**

<sup>17</sup> Then they said to the blind man, “What do you have to say concerning the man who opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

**Discussion: John 9:17**

The Pharisees ask what the Pharisees have to say about “the man” who healed him. This question indicates there is a division among the Pharisees, yet they seem to be

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<sup>17</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 784.

<sup>18</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: an Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 121-122.

<sup>19</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 784.

mocking the previously blind man giving the reader the impression that they do not believe he was healed.<sup>20</sup> The previously blind man answers their question by giving Jesus the title “prophet” he is giving Him the highest position he can think of. Note the progression the previously blind man makes from saying “the man they call Jesus” (John 9:11) to “He is a prophet” (John 9:17d).<sup>21</sup> Calling Jesus a prophet could be the first stage of recognizing He comes from God as we have seen with the Samaritan woman (John 4:19).<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the previously blind man calls Jesus a prophet to show His power comes from God, not from human nature.<sup>23</sup> Another characteristic of a prophet is the fact that Jesus communicates what God tells Him. Unlike ordinary individuals, Jesus knows the ways of people and the ways of God. Jesus also performs miracles like the prophets before Him, such as Moses feeding manna to the people in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).<sup>24</sup>

When he calls Jesus a prophet, the previously blind man continues to grow in his understanding of Jesus as well as his spirituality (discussed below) in this verse. The previously blind man is beginning to recognize Jesus comes from God and the miracle which He performed on him. The readers can hear the previously blind man’s outlook on life change as he continues to answer the Pharisees’ questions.

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<sup>20</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, “John,” in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 286.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>22</sup> John J Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000) 135.

<sup>23</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 340.

<sup>24</sup> Craig R Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 90.

**Translation: John 9:30-33**

<sup>30</sup> The man answered and said, “This is astonishing because you do not know where He is from and He opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will He hears you. <sup>32</sup> Never has anyone even from ago heard of causing a man born blind to see. <sup>33</sup> If He is not from God, He could do nothing.”

**Discussion: John 9:30-33**

In these verses, the readers see the previously blind man demonstrates an understanding in the world of Judaism. First, the previously blind man expresses discomfort that the Pharisees do not know where Jesus is from. The Pharisees are the religious leaders in Judaism, yet they have no clue where this Jesus figure comes from (John 9:30). The previously blind man states, “If He is not from God, He could do nothing.” (John 9:33). In John 9:25, the previously blind man refuses to call Jesus a sinner, and now he is convinced Jesus comes from God.<sup>25</sup>

Second, the previously blind man reminds the Pharisees that God does not listen to sinners (John 9:31). The readers see the previously blind man rebuking the Pharisees’ “we know” statement (John 9:24) where they claim that Jesus is a sinner with his own “we know” statement.<sup>26</sup> It is the righteous that God responds and gives aid to, not the

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<sup>25</sup> Rodney A Whitacre, “John,” in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, (Downers Grove, IL.; InterVarsity Press, 1999) 247/

<sup>26</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 345.

sinner, according to Jewish traditions and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> In the Jewish tradition, Jews had a special place before God, yet both Jews and Christians would say God only heard the righteous.<sup>28</sup> By saying God does not listen to sinners (John 9:31a), the previously blind man is pointing out the Pharisees' ignorance to their own teachings. This statement also rebukes the Pharisees' claims to Jesus being a sinner, because miracles are answered through prayer from God according to the Jewish tradition.<sup>29</sup>

This leads to the previously blind man's claim that Jesus has to be from God, otherwise how could He heal him (John 9:32-33). The magnitude of the miracle is what baffles the previously blind man when the Pharisees say Jesus is not from God, yet the traditions in Judaism say that healing works reveal the works of God.<sup>30</sup> In turn, the Pharisees should recognize the healing powers Jesus possesses are from God. Who else could give Jesus the healing touch to heal a blind man?

The previously blind man's psychosocial healing is strengthened by his understanding of the Jewish tradition. His understanding allows the previously blind man to go against the Pharisees by making way for the new and letting the old pass. This allows the previously blind man to welcome the light into his life and to progress to his spiritual healing as he accepts Jesus as Lord.

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<sup>27</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 660.

<sup>28</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 783.

<sup>29</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 346.

<sup>30</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 660.

As a result of his boldness to think he could teach them, the Pharisees throw the previously blind man out of the synagogue, a place of prayer (John 9:34). This once again makes the previously blind man an outsider. Yet the previously blind man finds a new community in his relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Closing Remarks on the Psychosocial Healings**

In this section, the readers witness the previously blind man gains an understanding of who he is as an individual who can see now and who this Jesus figure is. First, the man gains a new identity as the one who was blind and now has the ability to see. As a blind person, the man was an outsider to the synagogue, a place of sacrifice, because the Pharisees believed him being blind was a result of sins of either his parents or him in his mother's womb. The man is no longer the blind beggar; he is now a man with sight and with the insight to become one of Jesus' disciples. His world is changing, and he is changing with it.

Second, the man gives Jesus an identity. He first gives Jesus' name to the neighbors and the others without realizing who He is. To the previously blind man, he is just reporting the facts of how his eyes were opened and who healed him (John 9:11). Next, the previously blind man gives Jesus the title of prophet (John 9:17) as an individual who he recognizes comes from God. Jesus knows the ways of people and the ways of God which the previously blind man recognizes when he calls Him a prophet. When the previously blind man challenges the Pharisees as a teacher figure, they throw him out of the synagogue, a place of prayer. However, the previously blind man finds a new social network as one of Jesus' disciples as though they are family.

Finally, the previously blind man understands that Jesus could not heal him, unless He is from God (John 9:31-33). This shows the previously blind man's understanding of the Jewish tradition and how Jesus represents change in his world. The previously blind man has the ability to psychosocially process what Judaism says about how healing works and who can perform healings.

By giving Jesus the identity of a prophet who can heal, the previously blind man is establishing his own identity as one of Jesus' disciples. The previously blind man also establishes a new social network which will become his new culture. The next section will look at the previously blind man's spiritual healing as he grows closer to Jesus throughout the story.

#### John 9:13-17, 24-29, 35-38: The Spiritual Healing

In this final section dealing with the previously blind man, the readers will observe his spiritual healing. As stated before, a spiritual healing happens when an individual makes a confession of faith in Jesus Christ or strengthens his/her relationship with Him, at least in this paper which does not undermine other religions and their gods. To be spiritual, an individual needs to demonstrate three qualities: trustworthiness to God, loyalty to God, and confession of his/her faith. We have already seen the previously blind man trust Jesus when "he went and washed" after Jesus instructed him to. The previously blind man trusted Jesus that He was not leading him astray when he went and washed in the Pool of Siloam.<sup>31</sup> Now we will see the previously blind man

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<sup>31</sup> Craig R Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 107.

grow spiritually as he demonstrates loyalty to Jesus and confesses his faith in Jesus and God.

**Translation: John 9:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> They lead the one formerly blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of the Sabbath on which Jesus opened the blind man's eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then again the Pharisees kept asking how he received his sight.

He said, "He laid clay on my eyes and I washed and I can see."

<sup>16</sup> Then some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God since He does not keep the Sabbath." But others kept saying, "How can a man who is sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> Then they said to the blind man, "What do you have to say concerning the man who opened your eyes?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

**Discussion: John 9:13-17**

Here the previously blind man is experiencing the first of two interrogations by the Pharisees. The Pharisees try hard here to get the previously blind man to say Jesus is a sinner based on the fact that He broke the Sabbath. Instead the previously blind man just reports on what he knows (John 9:15, 25) since that is all he knows.<sup>32</sup> Jesus laid clay on his eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. As a result, the blind man could see. This is what the previously blind man knows to be true.

At the end of this scene, the Pharisees ask the previously blind man what he has to say about the man who healed him (John 9:17a). The previously blind man simply

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<sup>32</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 784.

answers by calling Jesus a prophet (John 9:17b). This shows how the previously blind man is growing in his trust and awareness of Jesus' true identity. The story's central theology comes out here as the reader defines blindness not as the inability to see but as a lack of faith in Jesus and God.<sup>33</sup> By calling Jesus a prophet (John 9:17b), the reader sees the previously blind man grow in spirituality. Not only does the verse show the reader what the previously blind man understands Jesus to represent, it also shows that he is growing in his belief in God and Jesus.

Blindness has an affective level to its meaning. On the cognitive level, blindness means the inability to see. The previously blind man overcame this blindness when Jesus places clay on his eyes and tells him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. Now the readers see the previously blind man overcome his blindness by calling Jesus a prophet and growing in his faith.

**Translation: John 9:24-29**

<sup>24</sup> Then they called the man who was blind for a second time and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> Then he answered that, "I do not know if this man is a sinner. I do know one thing: I who was blind can now see."

<sup>26</sup> Then they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't you want to become His disciples too, do you?"

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<sup>33</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 656.

<sup>28</sup> And they abused him and said, “You are Jesus’ disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know God has spoken through Moses, but we do not know where this man is from.”

**Discussion: John 9:24-29**

This scene is the second of two interrogations the previously blind man goes through with the Pharisees. The Pharisees start the interrogation by trying to get the previously blind man to “give glory God” (John 9:24) by saying Jesus has misled him and Jesus is a sinner. However the previously blind man is not so easily fooled and gives glory to God by testifying Jesus’ good works.<sup>34</sup> Here the previously blind man does not let the Pharisees persuade him and demonstrates his growing loyalty to Jesus which is important as his spirituality develops. The readers can notice the slight change in the previously blind man’s confidence. The more confidence the previously blind man gets, the more loyal he is to Jesus.

The Pharisees ask the same question they asked in the first interrogation of the previously blind man (John 9:26) in order to see if there is any inconsistency with his testimony. The previously blind man interprets the repeated question as a way for the Pharisees to mock him, rather than trying to get more information as to who Jesus is. The man cleverly turns the table back to the Pharisees by asking if they want to become Jesus’ disciples.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that John 9:27d starts with the Greek word *mh* which shows that the previously blind man expects a negative answer to his question. The

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<sup>34</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 790.

<sup>35</sup> Gail R O’Day. “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections, in *NIB*, 659.

previously blind man knows the Pharisees do not want to become Jesus' disciples. However, the way the previously blind man presents his question seems to imply that he considers himself one of Jesus' disciples.<sup>36</sup> This response shows how the previously blind man is growing in his spirituality. The previously blind man is naming Jesus as a person he will follow.

**Translation: John 9:35-38**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they cast him and found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?"

<sup>36</sup> The man answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, in order that I can believe in Him?"

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have seen Him and He is the one who is speaking with you."

<sup>38</sup> And the man said, "I believe, Lord," and he worshipped Him.

**Discussion: John 9:35-38**

Here is the first contact the readers have with Jesus since He healed the blind man (John 9:7). Like in John 5:14, Jesus finds the previously blind man on purpose it would seem. However, unlike the paralyzed man in John 5:14 who Jesus warns not to fall into his old pattern of life, the previously blind man has already passed the test when he stood up to the Pharisees. With regards to the previously blind man, Herman Ridderbos writes, "That Jesus has heard of the man's expulsion places their encounter in a certain light: Jesus is concerned about the excommunication, seeks out the lost sheep of the house of

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, "John," in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 290.

Israel, and binds him more tightly to himself.”<sup>37</sup> Ridderbos emphasizes the connection John 9 and 10 have with each other by explaining how Jesus shows that He is the good shepherd before saying He is in fact the good shepherd who lays down His own life for His sheep. The previously blind man is a lost sheep who Jesus goes and finds after he is expelled from the synagogue.

By Jesus asking the previously blind man if he believes in the Son of man, He is looking for an affirmative answer. The man has already proven his faith in Jesus by calling Him a prophet (John 9:17) and the one was sent by God (John 9:33).<sup>38</sup> Not only has the previously blind man made these statements, but he made them to the Pharisees who oppose Jesus to the greatest degree. Jesus is looking for the previously blind man to make a public confession, unlike the paralyzed man (John 5:14), that he believes in the Son of man.

The fact that the previously blind man is slightly confused by Jesus’ question of his faith in the Son of man does not imply he has no faith in the Lord. Instead, it implies that the Son of man was not a phrase used readily when the Gospel of John was written. However, the phrase points to the overall effect it has on the Gospel of John (John 1:51; 3:14; 5:27; 6:27; 8:28). Jesus responds to the previously blind man the same way he did to the Samaritan woman, “You see the one who is speaking with you.” (John 9:37).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 347.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>39</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 795.

This connection with the Samaritan woman to the previously blind man shows how they are both eager to know the individual known as the Son of man.

At once, the previously blind man confesses his faith in the Lord and worships Him. It was common for Gentiles and Jews to bow down and look at an individual's feet rather than his/her face if the individual was of a higher status when showing high respect, begging, or seeking mercy. This fits with the author's Christology and image of Jesus found in the Gospel of John (1:1, 18; 20:28). It also invites the readers of the Gospel of John to worship the Lord in the same way the previously blind man and the Samaritan woman do.<sup>40</sup>

### **Closing Remarks on the Spiritual Healings**

The readers see how the previously blind man has spiritual healings as well as psychosocial healings. First, the previously blind man calls Jesus a prophet (John 9:17d) which shows he is recognizing Jesus' identity, as we discussed in the psychosocial healing section, as well as growing to trust Him. The previously blind man is being bold when he calls Jesus a prophet in the presence of the Pharisees, since they have the authority to expel him from the synagogue. This means being in a relationship with Jesus is more important to the previously blind man than being in the synagogue community.

Second, the previously blind man demonstrates his growing loyalty to Jesus. The question the previously blind man poses to the Pharisees shows he is a disciple of Jesus and invites them to be Jesus' disciples, though he expects a negative answer. The previously blind man shows that he knows the consequence of being one of Jesus'

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 795.

disciples (being expelled from synagogue). However the previously blind man feels being Jesus' disciple is more important. The previously blind man continues to grow in his loyalty to Jesus. His spirituality is also growing because the previously blind man is willing to follow Jesus as one of His disciples. Third, the previously blind man publically confesses his faith in God and the Son of Man to Jesus. This is the final step in the previously blind man's spiritual healing: he confesses his loyalty to Jesus.

### Closing Remarks on the Blind Man's Healing

The readers finally see the full effect of the healing of the blind man. The readers notice how the three dimensions builds off of each other. Jesus physically healed him by opening his eyes. The previously blind man becomes psychosocially healed as he finds a new social network to be a part in where others will support him. This new social network includes Jesus and His disciples. The psychosocial healing also gives the previously blind man a new identity, not just as a man with sight but also as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The previously blind man's psychosocial healing is strengthened by his spiritual healing – the more he trusts Jesus Christ, the more he feels a part of Jesus' disciple group. The previously blind man is not the blind beggar anymore; he has been welcomed into the circle of Jesus' disciples. This provides the previously blind man with a new self-understanding as a disciple of Jesus who spreads the gospel. The previously blind man's spiritual healing is strengthened by his psychosocial healing because the more he confess Jesus Christ as his Lord, the more he wants to be involved with his new social network with Jesus' disciples. This shows how healing is a process which occurs over time. As he begins to find his place in the world, the previously blind man begins to trust Jesus, becomes loyal to Jesus, and proclaims his faith in Jesus, which is his spiritual

healing. The previously blind man has a new purpose in life: to worship and follow Jesus. He is no longer the blind man who begs by the temple; the previously blind man is now a follower of Jesus Christ.

### **The Condition of the Pharisees**

Now that we have seen the transformation of the blind man, we can turn our attention to the Pharisees and their physical, psychosocial, and spiritual conditions. The readers see a disconnection in the healing of the blind man and the condition of the Pharisees. Whereas the blind man is healed physically, psychosocially, and spiritually and comes to have faith in the Lord, the readers see the Pharisees having a disconnection between their physical condition and their psychosocial and spiritual conditions as they are growing apart from God.

#### John 9: The Physical Condition of the Pharisees

There is no reference in John 9 that states the physical condition of the Pharisees. The readers are left to assume that the Pharisees have no physical ailments which keep them from being a part of the working society. Therefore, unlike the blind man needing Jesus to heal him, the Pharisees do not need a physical cure. However, as we will see in the next two sections, the Pharisees need a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, even though they are physically well. One's well-being is not dependent on the need for a healing because it goes deeper than just the physical; healing also impacts the psychosocial and spiritual aspects of an individual. Even though a physical cure can lead to psychosocial and spiritual healings, like in the case of the previously blind man,

needing a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing is not dependent on needing a physical cure, as we will see with the Pharisees.

#### John 9:13-29, 34: the Psychosocial Condition of the Pharisees

In this section, we will examine the psychosocial condition of Pharisees by looking at three interrogation scenes. First, the Pharisees interrogate the previously blind man to find out how he received his sight. The Pharisees will try to claim Jesus is a sinner because He healed the blind man on the Sabbath day which breaks the third commandment. Second, the Pharisees interrogate the previously blind man's parents. Unfortunately, the Pharisees will only be able to verify that the man was born blind. The parents will not say how their son was healed in fear of being excommunicated from the synagogue. Third, the Pharisees interrogate the previously blind man again. In all three interrogations, the Pharisees demonstrate their understanding for the Torah and their refusal to accept any social network other than their own.

#### **Translation: John 9:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> They lead the one formally blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of the Sabbath on which Jesus opened the blind man's eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then again the Pharisees kept asking how he received his sight.

He said, "He laid clay on my eyes and I washed and I can see."

<sup>16</sup> Then some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God since He does not keep the Sabbath." But others kept saying, "How can a man who is sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> Then they said to the blind man, "What do you have to say concerning the man who opened your eyes?"

He said, “He is a prophet.”

**Discussion: John 9:13-17**

This is the first of two interrogations the Pharisees have with the previously blind man. Here the Pharisees make it clear Jesus has violated the Sabbath by healing the blind man. To violate the Sabbath indicates to the Pharisees, at least, that Jesus is distant from God<sup>41</sup> since He broke one of the Ten Commandments. The Pharisees know the Ten Commandments and where it says:

“Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.” (Exodus 20:8-11 NRSV).

The Pharisees have studied the Torah thoroughly and know it inside-out. Jesus broke the Sabbath in the three ways: 1) healing the blind man when it was not a life-or-death situation; 2) kneading clay which was one of the thirty-nine classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath; 3) anointing of the eyes.<sup>42</sup> The interrogation ends up being about this

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<sup>41</sup> Gail R O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB*, 656.

<sup>42</sup> Andreas J Kostenberger, “John,” in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 285-286.

“Jesus’ figure’s actions, yet He is not physically present and His name is not mentioned.”<sup>43</sup>

Ridderbos writes, “Jesus is the great absent and unmentioned one, his name unmentioned in all the interrogations, but still the one around whom the story revolves.”<sup>44</sup> The Pharisees are making Jesus their target and will not back down from their objective to corner Him. By doing so, the Pharisees are refusing to be in a relationship with Jesus.

The Pharisees “know” (oida 9:12, 20-21, 24-25, 29-31) Jesus is a sinner based on their intensive studies of the Torah as stated in the previous paragraph. The Greek word oida meaning “know” becomes a center part of the Pharisees interrogation of the previously blind man based on their understanding of the Torah.<sup>45</sup> The Pharisees know that an individual is not supposed to do work on the Sabbath as defined by the Torah. They cannot look past the fact that Jesus broke the Sabbath commandment in order to see He was doing the work of God. Culpepper states that the Pharisees as the interrogators demonstrate “‘excessive confidence,’ making frequent assertions that contrast with the healed man’s ‘pleas of ignorance.’ This establishes ‘a classic contrast between a braggart (an *alazon* in Greek drama) and the ironist (an *eiron*). With delightful subtlety, the narrator shows us the man’s insight and exposes the Pharisees’ blindness.’”<sup>46</sup> The Pharisees think they have an understanding of who God is but their understanding is impaired. They only think they see clearly. The Pharisees are refusing to change in their

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>44</sup> Herman N Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: a Theological Commentary*, 339.

<sup>45</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 784.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 784. Keener quotes Culpepper from *John*, page 177.

thinking which blocks them from the light; they are stuck in the darkness with their old ways of thinking.

The fact that there is a division among the Pharisees echoes the division of the neighbors and the others. This division emphasizes the ability for some individuals to recognize that Jesus could not perform these works, unless He comes from God.

Nicodemus recognizes Jesus' works come from God (John 3:12), like the previously blind man does (John 9:31, 33). Instead of finding unity as individuals should in the psychosocial dimension, the Pharisees have division among themselves.

John 9:13-17 begins a very intense drama between the Pharisees based on their understanding of the Torah and the previously blind man based on his physical cure experience. In the next section, the readers see the Pharisees interrogate the previously blind man's parents.

**Translation: John 9:18-23**

<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews did not believe this about him that he was blind and he received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who received his sight. <sup>19</sup> Then they asked them, "Is this your son who was blind since birth? Then how can he see now?"

<sup>20</sup> Then his parents answered and said, "We know this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But we do not know how he can see now or who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age. He will speak concerning himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they feared the Jews for the Jews decided that if anyone confessed Him to be the Messiah they would be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> On account of this, his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

### **Discussion: John 9:18-23**

The title of “Jews”, rather than the “Pharisees,” is used in this instance to refer the Jewish authorities. The parents are probably Jews themselves; otherwise they would not be members of the synagogue. The “fear of Jews” in the Gospel of John (John 7:13; 9:22; 19:38; 20:19) is a statement which silences individuals and causes individuals to be secretive about their faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup> The Jews are stuck in the dark as they find it impossible to stand against the authorities who hold the power to expel rebels from the synagogue.

The author of the Gospel of John begins this section with the Greek word *ejfwnhsan* meaning “to call” as a scene changer for the Jews to interrogate the parents. It also shows the social power the Jews were given in the social realm as they call and dismiss witnesses in an investigation.<sup>48</sup> The Jews know their decision in this matter holds a lot of weight among the neighbors and the others who know the previously blind man which will be the final say on the matter. The Jews know how they can use their power to their advantage and keep individuals in order.

On the other side of the interrogation are the previously blind man’s parents, who know the danger they face if they confess Jesus Christ as their Lord. If they did this, the previously blind man’s parents would face excommunication from the synagogue. Chances are the parents were poor given the fact they allow their son to beg near the temple. This would heighten their fear of being kicked out of the synagogue because

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<sup>47</sup> Gail R O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB*, 657.

<sup>48</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 787.

they would have to live on whatever skill the father could perform.<sup>49</sup> For this reason, the parents tell the Jews to ask their son since he is of age (John 9:21, 23) which would mean he is at least thirteen.<sup>50</sup> The parents are afraid of change which hinders their psychosocial development. As long as they allow their fear rule their lives, the parents will stay in the dark and keep themselves from being in a relationship with God and Jesus. Their fear of change is controlled by the lack of understanding the unknown possibilities in the social network of believers in Jesus because they do not know what life is like outside of the synagogue.

The Jews ask the “how” question (John 9:15b, 16d, 19c) for the third time since the interrogations started. The parents refuse to make a testimony as to how their son received his sight since it would require a full confession in Jesus Christ as Lord. This shows the parent’s failure to stand up for Jesus.<sup>51</sup> The parents simply tell the Jews “they do not know” and send them back to ask their son more questions. It is true that any testimony they would have been able to give would have been secondhand since they were not present at the actual physical cure. However, their lack of a testimony demonstrates to the readers their fear of the Jewish authorities and being excommunicated. It was common for individuals to refuse to go against the authorities, even if it meant abandoning their child during trial.<sup>52</sup> As a result, the parents refuse to join the previously blind man in his psychosocial healing as he becomes a disciple of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 787.

<sup>50</sup> Rodney A Whitacre, “John,” in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, 243.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>52</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 788.

Jesus Christ. The parents are separating themselves from their son who has been a part of their social network up until now.

The Jews know how to use their social power to instill fear into individuals. They use it to their advantage to ensure no one goes against their decisions or questions their rule. As a result, the Jews know no one will cross them. This is where the Jews fall behind the previously blind man's psychosocial development.

**Translation: John 9:24-29**

<sup>24</sup> Then they called the man who was blind for a second time and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> Then he answered that, "I do not know if this man is a sinner. I do know one thing: I who was blind can now see."

<sup>26</sup> Then they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't you want to become His disciples too, do you?"

<sup>28</sup> And they abused him and said, "You are Jesus' disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know God has spoken through Moses, but we do not know where this man is from."

**Discussion: John 9:24-29**

In these verses, the readers see the Pharisees try to get the previously blind man to call Jesus a sinner. The Pharisees start the interrogation with "Give glory to God" (John 9:24) as the traditional oath a witness gives on the stand to ensure they tell the truth or to confess one's sins during confession to worship God. The previously blind man will in

fact tell the truth by giving God glory for Jesus' healing work (John 9:25); however, the authorities refuse to give God glory for the miracle (John 9:24).<sup>53</sup> The Pharisees want the previously blind man to confess that he has fallen under the wrong leadership (Jesus) and are coercing him to repent. When the previously blind man gives God glory for working through Jesus, he proves to be more courageous than his parents, even at age thirteen (John 9:25).<sup>54</sup>

Here the readers see a clear example how the previously blind man's psychosocial healing and the Pharisees' psychosocial condition are going in opposite directions. As the previously blind man becomes more confident in his relationship with Jesus, the Pharisees become more distressed over Jesus' presence. The Pharisees refuse to get caught up in the excitement surrounding Jesus causing them to stay in the dark.

Again, the readers hear the Pharisees say "we know" when they called Jesus a sinner. This reminds the readers of Nicodemus, a Pharisee, knowing Jesus was from God by the works He performed (John 3:2). In both of these instances, the claims by the Jewish authorities are taken as official statements<sup>55</sup> on Jesus' character and the law. The Pharisees called Jesus a sinner (John 9:24) on the account that He broke the Sabbath by healing the blind man. The Pharisees make the assumption that Jesus is a sinner, which demonstrates their lack of understanding. The assumption is based on their own understanding of the Ten Commandments and what it means to break the Sabbath. Jesus

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<sup>53</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 658-659.

<sup>54</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 790.

<sup>55</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 659.

coming into the picture represents a need for change. By resisting change, the Pharisees are withholding themselves from the light and from experiencing a renewal in their faith. However, because the Pharisees are afraid of falling for a false prophet they are missing being in a relationship with God through Jesus.

The Pharisees ask the same question from the first interrogation of the previously blind man. They hope to find inconsistencies in his testimony. The previously blind man fails to answer their question and turns the table back on the Pharisees as discussed above.<sup>56</sup> This causes the Pharisees to be in an uproar.

In John 9:28, the Greek word *loidorevw* meaning abuse begins the Pharisees' rebuttal to the previously blind man. More specifically, the term implies malediction in which the Pharisees attempted to place a curse on the previously blind man. This implies an end to any objective inquiry the Pharisees had during this trial.<sup>57</sup> This further creates a breach between the Pharisees and Jesus by their refusal to accept the idea of being in a relationship with Jesus. By doing so, the Pharisees are separating themselves from God who they are trying so hard to protect and to stay faithful to that they are missing Jesus' message.

The Pharisees claim to be "disciples of Moses" according to their Pharisaic tradition of Moses on Mount Sinai. The "we know" statement in John 9:29 indicates how the Pharisees viewed Moses as the teacher of all prophets since God told Jeremiah to listen to his teacher and their teacher who is Moses. However, Moses was meek

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<sup>56</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 659.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 659. Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 790.

(Numbers 12:3) which undermines the Pharisees' claim to be his disciples. The Pharisees practice dominance over the members in their synagogues.<sup>58</sup> In John 9:29, the Pharisees point to their superior relationship with Moses according to the tradition of the Pentateuch. It becomes ironic to the reader since God did speak with Moses; however, Jesus is the word of God made flesh (John 1:14).<sup>59</sup> This continues to separate the Pharisees from God.

This is where the previously blind man answers the Pharisees with the fact that Jesus could not perform such a miracle, unless He was from God (as discussed above). Of course, the very idea of the man going against their decision causes uproar among the Pharisees which is discussed in the next section.

**Translation: John 9:34**

<sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, “You are born completely into sin, and you teach us?” And they cast him out.

**Discussion: John 9:34**

The previously blind man just stated in the verse before that Jesus could not be a sinner. Jesus had to come from God based on the miracle He just performed. No one else has performed such a miracle – healing one who has been blind since birth.

The Jewish authorities answer the previously blind man by saying he is a sinner. This claim is not based on a Sabbath violation; the Pharisees are making the claim based

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<sup>58</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 791.

<sup>59</sup> Gail R O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB*, 659.

on the link between sin and illness. However, Jesus denied this linkage (John 9:2) which the Pharisees continue to support. This statement seems to further incriminate the Pharisees by contradicting themselves. They tried to deny the man's being blind since birth to dismiss the miracle (John 9:18-19), and now they are calling him a sinner because of being born blind (John 9:34).<sup>60</sup> By dismissing the previously blind man, the Pharisees are separating themselves from anyone associated with Jesus by calling them a sinner which shows how they are refusing the changes that are taking place.

The Pharisees also correctly identify that the previously blind man is trying to teach them. Instead of seeing the evidence in front of them, the Pharisees refuse the previously blind man teachings by throwing his blindness back in his face. This refusal further separates the Pharisees from Jesus and God.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the Pharisees are refusing to have the roles switched on them. The Pharisees, not the previously blind man, are the all-knowing. Therefore, the Pharisees feel threatened by the idea of the previously blind man being able to teach them.

To further separate themselves from the previously blind man, the Pharisees cast Him out. The Greek word used is *eikbavllw* meaning to cast out could imply that the Pharisees made the man go out of their presence to end the interrogation. It is more likely that the Pharisees casted the previously blind man out of the synagogue creating a breach between the Jewish authorities and those Jews confessing Jesus as the Lord.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 660.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 660. Rodney A Whitacre, "John," in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, 247.

<sup>62</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 660.

This breach will continue to get wider as time goes on as the Pharisees plot against Jesus and eventually have Him crucified.

### **Closing Remarks of the Pharisees' Psychosocial Condition**

The Pharisees isolated themselves from God and Jesus in three ways which makes their psychosocial condition the opposite of the previously blind man. First, the Pharisees called Jesus a sinner (John 9:16, 24) based on the commandment to keep the Sabbath. Jesus broke the Sabbath since He could have waited until the next day to heal the blind man. By calling Jesus a sinner, the Pharisees are refusing to admit He comes from God, and therefore they are refusing to be in a relationship with Jesus and isolating themselves from God.

Second, the Pharisees are told by the previously blind man's parents that he was in fact blind since birth, which confirms the miracle, at least for the reader. If the Pharisees admitted that Jesus performed the miracle, than they would need to give up their social power which they hold over the Jews who fear them. The Pharisees are accustomed to being looked upon by the Jews to make decisions regarding the Torah. By calling Jesus a miracle worker, the Pharisees would be putting Jesus on the same level as God which they are refusing to do. This causes the Pharisees to further isolate from God and Jesus.

Third, the Pharisees claim the previously blind man as sinner because he was born blind. By saying the previously blind man is a sinner, the Pharisees are trying to provide a way to make the miracle invalid because God would never listen to the prayers of sinners. If the miracle is invalid, than there is no way Jesus can be from God which further isolates the Pharisees from Him. These remarks show how the Pharisees further

isolate themselves from God and refuse to be in a relationship with Jesus (which will be discussed in the next section).

#### John 9:39-41: The Spiritual Condition of the Pharisees

As we discuss the spiritual condition of the Pharisees, we will see how Jesus will answer the remarks of the Pharisees and their lack of faith. Unlike the previously blind man, Jesus will call the Pharisees “blind” because of their lack of faith in Him. Instead of growing closer to God (like the previously blind man), the Pharisees grow away from God by rejecting Jesus Christ as a result of isolating themselves from Him.

#### **Translation: John 9:39-41**

<sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, “For judgment, I came into the world in order that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.”

<sup>40</sup> The Pharisees who were with Him and heard these things said to Him, “We are not blind, are we?”

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say you can see your sins remains.”

#### **Discussion: John 9:39-41**

This is the final scene in John 9, which is a conversation between the Pharisees and Jesus Christ. The conversation starts with Jesus stating He came into the world to bring judgment upon it. The judgment (John 9:39) will divide individuals into two groups: those who believe in the light and those who stay in the darkness.<sup>63</sup> It goes back

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<sup>63</sup> Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*, 795.

to the light and darkness theme discussed in chapter two. The author of John uses light to symbolize how individuals accept Jesus Christ as Lord and as one who came from God and darkness to symbolize those who reject Him.

The Pharisees respond with a sarcastic question of whether they were blind (John 9:40). Of course, the Pharisees were not blind physically, as discussed above; they were not in need of any physical cure. Yet Jesus responds to their rather sarcastic question with a serious answer. Jesus states that if they refuse the light, their sin remains with them (John 8:24; 15:24; 16:9). With this statement, Jesus turns the table on the Pharisees and convicts them for their unbelief.<sup>64</sup> By doing so, Jesus cuts any link between blindness and sin, and therefore He calls the Pharisees sinners, a tag they have been trying to put on the previously blind man and Jesus for the whole chapter. The reader sees sin being defined not by illness or violating the law but by refusing to accept Jesus as Lord.<sup>65</sup>

However the Pharisees are blind when they do not confess Jesus as their Lord and when they accept their own psychosocially and spiritually condition. The Pharisees do not want to change; they are comfortable in their life. By accepting their current condition, the Pharisees are isolating themselves from God who they claim gives them their authority.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 796.

<sup>65</sup> Gail R O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *NIB*, 661.

### Closing Remarks on the Pharisees' Conditions

Here John shows the reader that the Pharisees are the ones who truly need to be healed. The previously blind man has welcomed the light and has chosen to live for the rest of his life by becoming a disciple of Jesus. The Pharisees on the other hand have chosen to stay in the darkness by isolating Jesus Christ, which causes them to separate from God. The Pharisees' physical condition is perfectly fine with no need for a physical healing. However, the Pharisees' psychosocial condition blocks them from identifying Jesus as Lord and coming into a relationship with God. Their spirituality is defined by their blindness caused by their lack of faith in Jesus Christ which separates them from God. This shows the readers how the Pharisees need to experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, though they need to choose to have Jesus in their lives. Since neither the psychosocial nor the spiritual dimensions fall into place for the Pharisees, it is difficult for them to experience any type of healing. As a result, the Pharisees are the ones who are blind now.

### Conclusion

By examining John 9, the reader has seen how healing is not always dependent on an individual needing a physical cure. In the case of the blind man, he experienced healing in all three dimensions: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. Jesus healed the blind man, so he could physically see the world around him. The previously blind man also experienced a psychosocial healing when he was being interrogated by the Pharisees as he gains an understanding of his new identity and his new social network. The spiritual healing experienced by the previously blind man happens when he learns to trust Jesus, becomes loyal to Jesus, and confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and worships Him.

On the other hand, the world the Pharisees know falls apart. True, the Pharisees are not in need of a physical cure; they always had the ability to physically see. However, Jesus and the previously blind man challenge the Pharisees psychosocially and spiritually as they refuse to accept the role Jesus plays in the world and the fact He comes from God. The Pharisees refuse to accept Jesus as Lord (spiritual healing) because it goes against everything the Torah teaches them, or so they think. By doing so, the Pharisees are isolating themselves from God and are refusing to become a part of the circle of believers in Jesus Christ as disciples (psychosocial healing). The reader knows what the previously blind man realizes during the interrogations – that Jesus is in fact from God and was sent to do His works – yet the Pharisees continue to deny Jesus' connection with God.

This chapter has helped to build upon the figure introduced in chapter one. In the next chapter, we will discuss how each of the healing stories fits the diagram. Each healing happens differently depending on the needs of the individual. God recognizes we are all unique individuals with different needs; He meets the needs of each individual.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HEALING TOUCH

Healings work in various ways depending on the needs of the individual. Some individuals need a physical cure because they suffer a physical impairment. Some individuals do not feel included in any social network where they have the support of others. These individuals need a psychosocial healing to feel included in a social network where others give them support. Still others suffer in the spirit and are not in a relationship with Jesus. Readers are reminded this paper views spirituality in Christian terms, though it does not view other faith systems any less important. Individuals desiring to be in a relationship with the Triune God are in need of a spiritual healing. Individuals can suffer one, two, or all of the levels at sometime in his/her life. God knows what each individual needs, even if he/she does not.

#### **Summary of the Healing Stories**

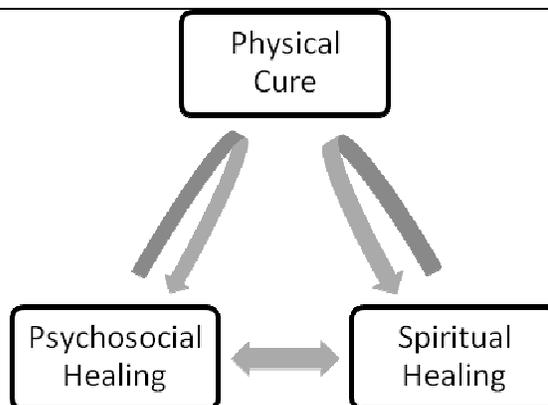
In this paper, we have discussed four healing stories. A quick overview of the each healing story will help us to see the “how” question which was discussed in chapter one. Each individual has his/her own needs when he/she is healed. Some need a physical cure while others only need psychosocial and spiritual healings, yet others need all three. Some seek their healings (those needing a physical cure) while others are surprised by the

all-mighty power of Jesus. Using a quick summary and a diagram of each healing, we will be able to answer Jane's question.

In the first story, Jesus is approached by the royal official to heal his son. You will notice in figure 4-1 below the curved arrow between the psychosocial healing and the physical cure. Figure 4-1 appears a little different from the other diagrams. It starts at the psychosocial healing stage where the royal official just hears of Jesus and thinks, "What the heck?" which shows the royal official's understanding of Jesus as a miracle worker. It also demonstrates that Jesus does not measure one's faith when He physically cures an individual. However, after the physical cure, the royal official builds a new social network of believers in Jesus Christ around him. The same is true with the curved arrow which starts at the spiritual healing and goes up to the physical cure but goes back down to spiritual healing which symbols the weak faith the royal official has when he first approaches Jesus as a miracle worker. The royal official trusts

Jesus enough  
to heal his  
son, though it  
is not until he  
returns home  
and finds out  
his son was  
healed that  
the royal

**Figure 4-1: The Healing of the Royal Office (John 4:46-54)**



official and his whole household come to believe in Jesus. Neither one of these arrows could be double ended since the physical cure only happens once.

Now between the psychosocial healing and spiritual healing there is a double arrow because these healings can happen simultaneously with each other. The more the royal official feels comfortable in his new identity as a believer in Jesus Christ, the more he trusts and confesses Jesus as Lord; the more he believes in Jesus, the more the royal official feels included in the group of believers. This pattern will occur again and again in the healing stories.

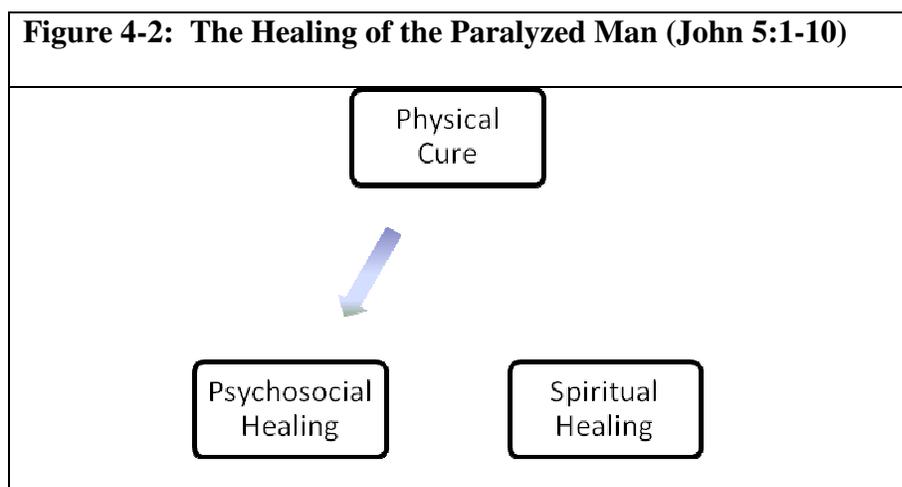
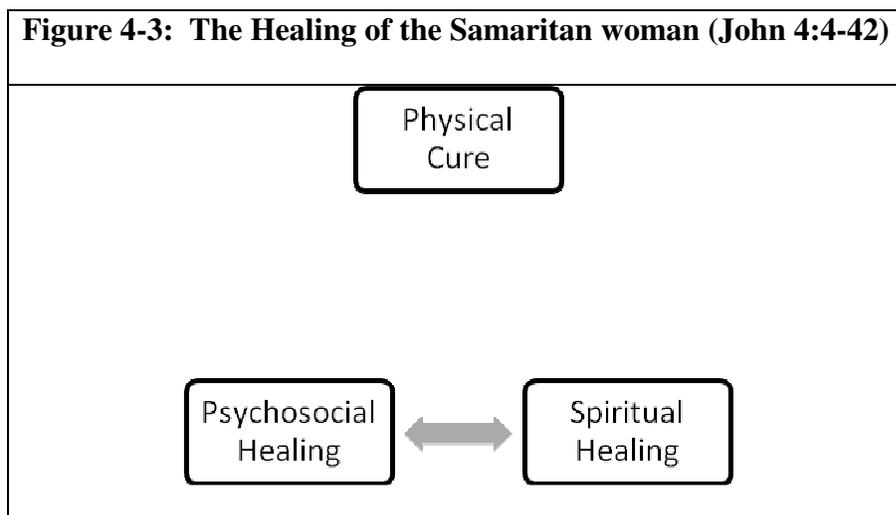


Figure 4-2 above shows the healing process of the paralyzed man in John 5:1-10.

In this story, Jesus approaches the paralyzed man to give him a physical cure, unlike the royal official approaching Jesus and asking for the physical cure. The faded arrow from the physical cure to the psychosocial healing illustrated that the paralyzed man comes to be able to name Jesus as the man who physically cured him of his disability for the Pharisees, though this is as far as his psychosocial healing goes. The lack of arrows to the spiritual healing from either the physical cure or the psychosocial healing illustrates that the paralyzed man does not appear to experience a spiritual healing. This is based on

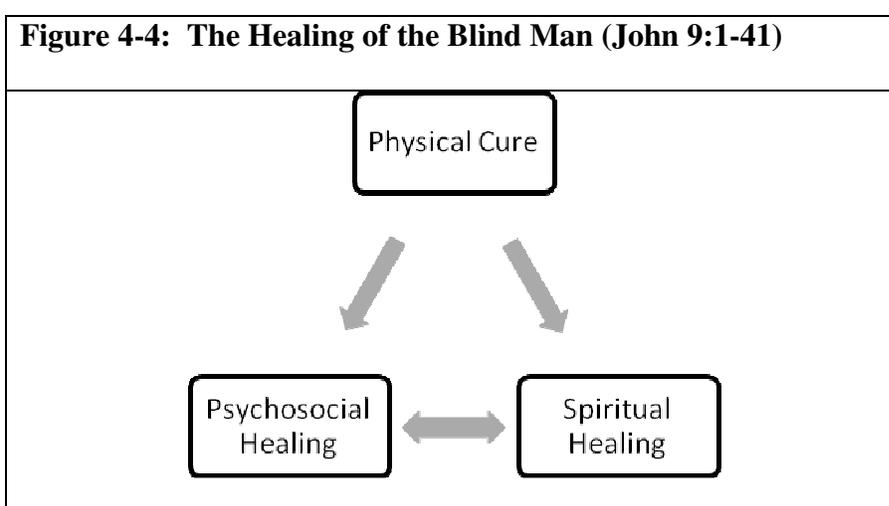
the definition of coming into a full relationship with God and Jesus which the man who was paralyzed does not do but instead betrays Him to the Pharisees. Since the man who was paralyzed has a shaky foundation to his psychosocial healing, one could imagine experiencing a spiritual healing would also be shaky which is seen in this case.



The next story we examined was the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. As we said before, the Samaritan woman did not need a physical cure; hence the physical cure box in figure 4-3 has no arrows going to it. However, the Samaritan woman does need a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing, which she experiences while talking to Jesus. The Samaritan woman experiences her psychosocial healing when she gains a new identity as an insider as one of Jesus' disciples who welcomes her into their social network. The Samaritan woman experiences her spiritual healing when she confesses Jesus to be the Messiah and his ability to give her "living water". Also, the Samaritan woman quickly becomes a disciple of Jesus and goes and tells others about Jesus and brings them back to Him. This is a good example of how a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing can support each other. The more the Samaritan woman feels included

in Jesus' social network of disciples, the more she puts her faith in Jesus Christ and vice-versa. Her healing process is a good example how healing is a life-long process.

The examination of the healing of the blind man has given the reader an opportunity to see how individuals can be healed at all three levels. The reader first saw the blind man healed physically with Jesus giving him his sight (John 9:6-7). The blind man has lived in darkness for the first part of his life. Now that Jesus has opened his eyes the previously blind man can see the light.

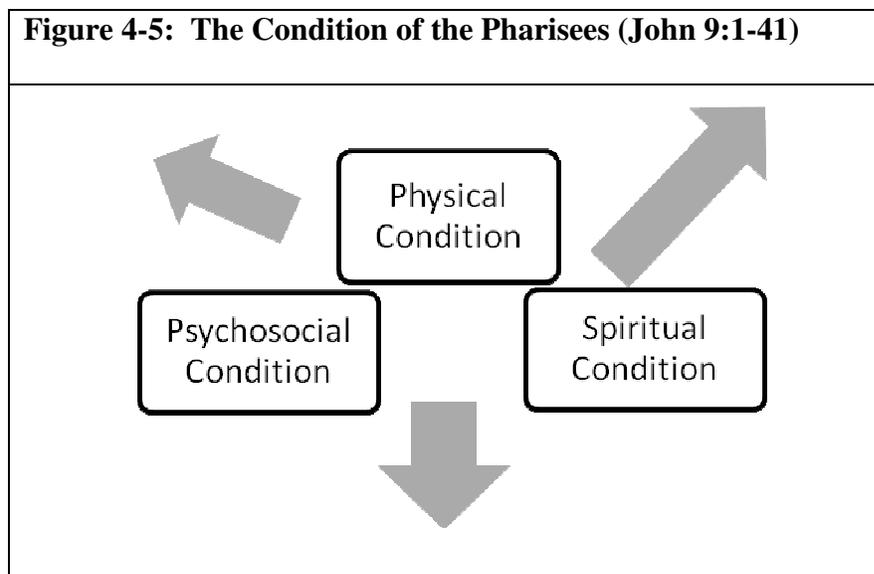


As a result of his physical cure, the previously blind man experiences a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing; hence the one-way arrows in figure 4-4 above from the physical cure to both the psychosocial healing and spiritual healing. The previously blind man experiences a psychosocial healing as he is cast out of the synagogue and welcomed into the social network of Jesus' disciples. As he is interrogated by the Pharisees, the previously blind man becomes more confident in the fact that Jesus is from God and does His works on earth (John 9:13-17, 24-33). The spiritual healing of the previously blind man happens also during his interrogations by the Pharisees. His spiritual healing comes to a climax when he meets Jesus the second time

(John 9:34-38), and he realizes He is Lord, worships Him, and becomes his disciple (John 9:38). Like the royal official, the previously blind man experiences his psychosocial healing and spiritual healing simultaneously; hence the double arrow between them (explanation above). The previously blind man sees the light in a metaphoric sense as discussed in chapter two.

Each dimension of the healing in the case of the previously blind man supports the other by making the other two dimensions stronger. The previously blind man experiences psychosocial healing and spiritual healing which are preceded by his physical cure. The fact that Jesus welcomes the previously blind man in the social network (his psychosocial healing) of His disciples strengthens his spiritual healing. At the same time, it is the previously blind man's spiritual healing which makes him long to be one of Jesus' disciples. The healing process is a lifetime journey which can lead individuals to places they could only image.

On the opposite end, the reader sees the Pharisees sticking to what the Torah teaches as well as their own objectives. If the Pharisees succumb to the fact Jesus is the Lord who comes from God, then they would have to give up their authority and follow Him. However, the Pharisees never experience a healing of any kind; hence the reason in figure 4-5 the arrows point away from the boxes. The arrows also represent the Pharisees growing apart from God as they continue to reject Jesus in the Gospel of John. Since the Pharisees refuse to welcome the idea of a psychosocial healing by becoming one of Jesus' disciples, they cannot experience a spiritual healing and vice-versa. There is no foundation for the Pharisees to experience any kind of healing which makes it impossible for them to reshape their thinking and becomes disciples of Jesus Christ.



These diagrams help us to see how healings occur and what happens when individuals refuse to accept healings, especially psychosocial and spiritual healings. When individuals are healed in all three dimensions, each one responds to a change in the other two. Healing is a never-ending process; it continues throughout one's life.

### **Implications of the Healing Stories**

There is a challenge for all church leaders to help individuals to see how they are being healed in the present. For many individuals, being healed means to experience a physical cure, so that physical impairments are just memories of the past. As I think of Jane, I remember her pain; pain in which has been growing within her for years. Jane would love to experience the physical cure the blind man experienced (John 9:6-7), and most individuals who have a physical disability would love a physical cure, especially on days when the muscle spasms are a little much. But I look at Jane and see her needing healing in all three dimensions: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. She longs to know who Jesus Christ is and what He can give her.

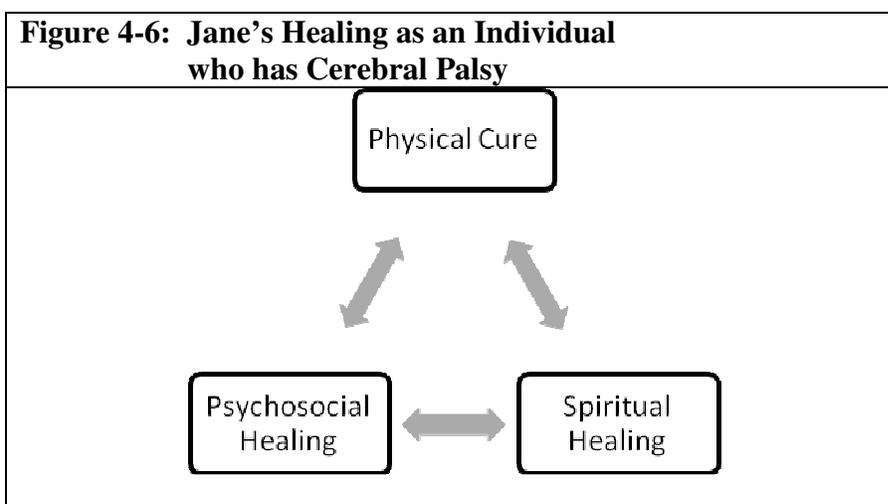
Jane's question, "Why am I not healed? Do I need more faith?", is not what she is really asking; whether Jane is wondering why she has not experienced a physical cure and if she needs to have more faith in God. The readers have seen that experiencing a physical cure is not dependent on one's faith, especially in the case of the previously blind man who comes to faith after his physical cure. This is what Jane's father is looking for when he has the forty or so individuals put their hands on her and prays over her. It is the magical physical cure he desires for Jane. Is that really what Jane needs? We know from the Samaritan woman's healing that only He knows what Jane really needs. After twenty-seven years I am guessing God thinks this is not what she needs, since Jane has yet to experience a physical cure.

This is the tricky part, since her father has told Jane she needs to be physically cured. How does one change a way of thinking of an individual when a parent has grilled it into their head? In Jane's case, I would begin with defining a cure and a healing. A cure is an event where the doctor can fix the physical impairment by performing a surgery or prescribing medication. Jane has had her fair amount of surgeries from trying to ease her back pain to acid reflex. Jane is also on a number of medications to help her to ease her pain. As far as a physical cure, Jane has tried anything the doctors would allow her to do to better her physical health.

A healing, on the other hand, is the responsibility and choice of the individual as well as the responsibility of the community and the social network to encourage and support him/her. An individual needs to surround him/herself with others who will give him/her guidance to make positive life decisions. In Jane's case, it is not that she has not made positive choices in her life. After all, Jane has her masters in social work.

Truthfully, Jane needs to find a way to surround herself with individuals who lift her out of the daily grind of life. Since she still lives at home, Jane gets swiped into the family drama. Jane has a twin brother who steals her money and checks, medications, and movies. Her sister leaves her two year old son at home with Jane while she goes to work. This causes Jane to feel stuck in life.

If Jane could find other outlets where she could be herself, she would be able to escape the family drama. Jane would then be able to find a social network to provide her a way to find a release in life. The previously blind man finds a release from the Pharisees' hold by becoming Jesus' disciple. For Jane, it could be going to an open mic night or a book group weekly where she could express herself in a unique way.



Going back to Jane's question, "How can I be healed?", I would explain to her that healing has three dimensions: physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. Figure 4-6 above shows how I see Jane experiencing the healing process. I have already explained that the difference between a healing and a cure above. Since Cerebral Palsy is a progressive disability where individuals have the opportunity to overcome their physical limitations, I decided that the arrows between physical cure and psychosocial healing and

physical cure and spiritual healing should double arrows. This is because as Jane gets physically stronger she will feel better about herself and feel more involved in the world around her. The psychosocial and spiritual dimensions are where individuals experience healings. These dimensions are where I believe Jane could benefit the most when she experiences a healing. Jane longs to be part of a group where people will allow her to escape the muck in her life and lift her up which would be the psychosocial dimension to her healing. This would help Jane to find her place in the world. Jane has many gifts, including being a careful listener, to share with society. By recognizing her gifts, she would be able to connect with others and become a part of society.

As part of her psychosocial healing, Jane would grow an understanding of the gift Jesus Christ has to offer her. This gift would hopefully lead Jane to want to be a part of the group of believers in the Triune God which would support her spiritual healing. Truth be told, I pray daily for Jane to see the light. I see her long to be accepted for the exceptional person she truly is.

Being in a relationship with the Triune God, Jane would have someone to give all of her worries to. This would ease her mind and give her more time to enjoy life, eternal life at best. When Jane confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, she would welcome God into her life. By making a confession, Jane would be giving her life to God and becoming a part of Jesus' disciples' social network.

Even if Jane does not experience a physical cure as she would hope, she can still and does experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing which occur simultaneously. Healing can occur in one, two, or all three of the dimensions depending on the needs of the individual. Being healed in one of the dimensions is not dependent on

the other two dimensions, even if the individual needs healing in the other two dimensions. However, an individual experiencing healing in all 3 dimensions or two of the dimensions has an opportunity to experience life to its fullest. As a dimension experiences a change or a healing, the other two dimensions also experience a change. Healing is a life-long process which continues to always change an individual.

A lot of other issues keep individuals from recognizing how God is healing them. As church leaders, we need to help individuals recognize how God is healing and working in their lives. When we can give them the understanding of the healing process, we are giving them the opportunity to recognize their own physical cures and to experience a psychosocial healing and a spiritual healing. There is no script of how a healing occurs. Each individual has his/her own stories which are only known to God. It is our job to uncover individuals' stories and to see God working in their lives.

## APPENDIX A: TRANSLATION OF JOHN 9:1-41

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus passed by, he saw a blind man.

<sup>2</sup> His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents have sinned, but in order that the works of God become known in him. <sup>4</sup> It is necessary for us to work the deeds of the one who sent Me as long as it is day, for when night comes no one is able to work. <sup>5</sup> When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

<sup>6</sup> When He said this, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva and anointed him (the blind man) with the clay on his eyes. <sup>7</sup> He said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam (which means the sent one).” Then he (the blind man) went and washed and came back able to see.

<sup>8</sup> Then the neighbors and those who formally saw him as a beggar began to ask, “Is he not the one who sat and begged?” <sup>9</sup> Some kept saying, “He is,” while others kept saying, “He is not, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am.”

<sup>10</sup> Then they kept saying, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

<sup>11</sup> He answered them, “The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and I received sight.”

<sup>12</sup> They said to him, “Where is He?”

He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup> They lead the one formally blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of the Sabbath on which Jesus opened the blind man's eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then again the Pharisees kept asking how he received his sight.

He said, "He laid clay on my eyes and I washed and I can see."

<sup>16</sup> Then some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God since He does not keep the Sabbath. But others kept saying, "How can a man who is sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> Then they said to the blind man, "What do you have to say concerning the man who opened your eyes?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews did not believe this about him that he was blind and he received his sight, and they called the parents of the man who received his sight. <sup>19</sup> Then they asked them, "Is this your son who was blind since birth? Then how can he see now?"

<sup>20</sup> Then his parents answered and said, "We know this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But we do not know how he can see now or who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age. He will speak concerning himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they feared the Jews for the Jews decided that if anyone confessed Him to be the Messiah they would be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> On account of this, his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

<sup>24</sup> Then they called the man who was blind for a second time and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> Then he answered that, "I do not know if this man is a sinner. I do know one thing: I who was blind can now see."

<sup>26</sup> Then they said to him, “What did He do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

<sup>27</sup> He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Don’t you want to become His disciples, too?”

<sup>28</sup> And they abused him and said, “You are Jesus’ disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know God has spoken through Moses, but we do not know where this man is from.”

<sup>30</sup> The man answered and said, “This is astonishing because you do not know where He is from and He opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will He hears you. <sup>32</sup> Never has anyone even from ago heard of causing a man born blind to see. <sup>33</sup> If He is not from God, He could do nothing.”

<sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, “You are born completely into sin, and you teach us?” And they casted him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they cast him and found him and said, “Do you believe in the son of man?”

<sup>36</sup> The man answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, in order that I can believe in Him?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You have seen Him and He is the one who is speaking with you.”

<sup>38</sup> And the man said, “I believe, Lord,” and he worshipped Him.

<sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, “For judgment, I came into the world in order that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.”

<sup>40</sup> The Pharisees who were with Him and heard these things said to Him, “We are not blind, are we?”

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say you can see your sins remains.”

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